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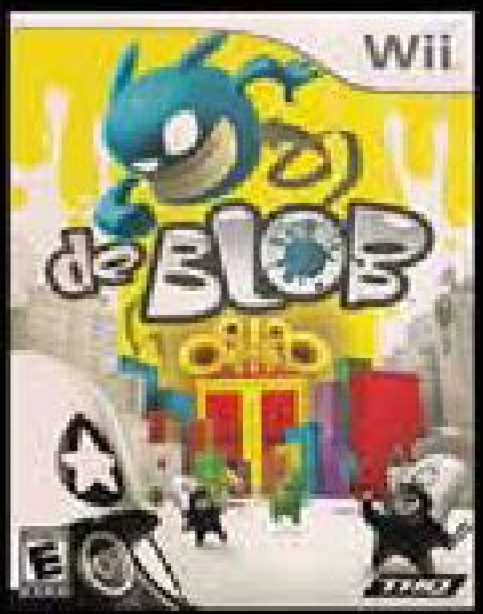

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ALPHA

ADVENTURES IN GAMES DEVELOPMENT: NEWS, VIEWS & MORE

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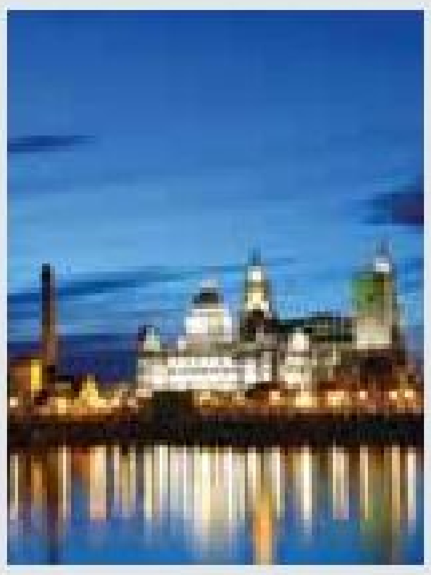

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Developers rally against censorship

Games need to be held to same content standards as other media, argues Quantic Dream's creative director David Cage

by Ed Fear

While the issue of game ratings has long been fought between various bodies in the publishing space, developers are now rallying against a rising tide in censorship.

The issue first came to light in the UK when *Manhunt 2* was refused classification by the BBFC, deeming its content too inappropriate for public consumption. But other countries, such as Australia and Germany, have much stricter – and much more ban-happy – ratings boards. From drug references in *Fallout 3* to sexual references in Piranha Bytes' *Risen*, gaming content is getting cut from all sides.

But a tide is turning, and developers are starting to speak out against oppressive and hypocritical standards that our industry is forced to conform to.

Quantic Dream's David Cage is one such person. The *Heavy Rain* director used his keynote session at GDC Europe to implore developers to stand up against censorship of their artistic works.

"I write games about people who are in love, and people who are in love kiss, and they make love," said Cage. "And yet I can't put this into a game because I get threatened that the game will only be sold in sex shops, or it won't find a distributor. It's effectively censorship.

"We had a shower scene in *Fahrenheit* that was very tasteful," Cage said. "There was only a flash of breast for just a second – and yet, despite the fact that this was a 17+ rated game aimed specifically at adults, in some territories we had to put her in a swimsuit. A swimsuit, in the shower. I mean, how ridiculous is that?"

But it goes far beyond just sex – after a particularly violent school shooting, later blamed on games, the German government is now considering passing an act banning the development of violent games in the country.

Already, German developers are having to consider the possibility of moving their operations should the law be passed. Crytek CEO Cevat Yerli told *Joystiq* that while the company originally thought the law was disrespectful and vowed to not change its strategy, its hand might now be forced. "We're not thinking of moving unless the law happens," he said. "If you move a company, you think of it as doing so strategically, to get more benefit out of a country. Moving because a law comes in is too reactive for us."

No developer is arguing against ratings, says Cage – in fact, he describes them as 'absolutely necessary' – but the ratings boards should not have the power to ban content and force the hands of developers, especially when the standards that games are held to are so different from the standards of other media.

"I'm glad ratings exist," he said. "But we need to make sure that games are judged by the same standards as film. What can be shown in an M-rated film should also be allowed in an M-rated game. We need to get censorship back to normal standards. Their excuse is that games are interactive – but I've checked, and there is no study to ever show that interactivity has any effect."

He also pushed publishers to accept brave, potentially risky content and stand behind it as a medium for artistic expression. in particular praising EA for not buckling under pressure from more extreme sections of the US media over the *Mass Effect* alien sex scene.

"We make the problem worse by caving immediately, by recalling games. I loved EA's reaction to the *Mass Effect* stuff – they simply stood their ground and said 'We have done nothing wrong, there's nothing to be shocked about.' I pray more publishers have similar reactions."

> ***"What can be shown in an M-rated film should be also be allowed in an M-rated game."***
>
> *David Cage, Quantic Dream*

Editorial

The marketing maelstrom

GDC EUROPE WAS a world of contradictions. It was Europe's self-proclaimed biggest developer show; but had an over-stretched timetable. It had 1,000+ visitors; but its session line up boasted only a few genuine highlights.

And, most tellingly of all, many speakers talked at length about ways they had innovated on behalf of Europe in the face of globalised publishers, only to moments later undermine that with their product demos.

There were messages and themes to draw, if you looked for them (as we have to the right). But ultimately they were lost in the noise of Gamescom, the product showcase taking place at the same time. It was a fairly perfect demonstration of the marketing and promotional maelstrom that even studios with the best intentions and aspirations get caught in.

Best example was David Cage, of upcoming PS3 title *Heavy Rain*. 'Publishers often ask how many guns does your game have?' But his games aren't like that, he said – they apparently can't be boiled down to bullet points on a press release. Alas, moments later he was stood on a different stage, the one for Sony's presser, where he said he was proud to be revealing the fourth character in the game – another step in an expert and meiculous PR plan.

EA did the same thing – the producer of its Divine Comedy adaptation *Dante's Inferno* said he too was happy to be unveiling… the sixth circle of hell! You can imagine how the marketing team there must punched the air when it turned out Dante's Inferno was being commissioned. Nine circles of hell equals nine carefully orchestrated PowerPoint checkbox opportunities.

But games can't be crafted with a view to how a press release will sum them up. That's why *Develop* feels one of the most interesting developments in recent months has been Channel 4's decision to start actively funding games projects, spending close to £2m. You can find out more about that all on page 22. Channel 4's games are designed to fulfill an educational criteria – a broad theme – but aren't created initially to satisfy marketing reveals or PR plans. That's the way all games should be made.

A little naive of me in the current climate? Yes, a little – but the alternative is bland games whose sole USP is the number of guns or multiplayer maps it features.

Michael French

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Michael

Studios diversify

Major European games developers look to tackle more far-reaching

by Michael French

Games are no longer solitary experiences confined to the console, computer or handheld, according to leading developers across Europe.

Instead, they are multi-media products that should take in various forms of content delivery – specifically spin-off merchandise such as books, toys and movies – to cultivate communities and offset the costs of rising budgets. Icelandic *EVE Online* creator CCP Games is no stranger to this approach. At GDC Europe last month, the studio unveiled *Dust 514,* a brand new console FPS it is developing at its Shanghai studio.

Dust 514 is not a standalone title, however – it feeds directly into the bigger *EVE* MMO, allowing players to experience life fighting for territory planet side in the tactical space opera game – while PC players continue to shape the galaxy from their desktops at the same time.

CCP CEO Hilmar Veigar Petursson described it as 'one universe, one war'.

"We looked hard at how people play in their living room and chose to make a specially made experience for that environment," he said. The backstory to the game is being set up in a book specially commissioned by the studio, and is just one example of the ways CCP has managed a cross-media approach independently – usually such merchadising machinations have been the purview of the big publishers who seek to exploit IP.

> ***"The goal is to grow games by taking the know-how that other industries have."***
>
> Yves Guillemot, Ubisoft

But for CCP, it's all about ways to please and find new audiences – with the result being not just profits, but better and more engrossing, varied gameplay.

"There are ways in which these communities will meld in time. Our hope is that alliances will start to form and we will have social structures that spills over from the console game to the PC one. Or you might be able to control parts of the universe with both games."

The studio prides itself on its single-shard sole server game – but has expanded the *EVE* world extensively, and not just in terms of its 11 expansion packs.

CCP has experimented with radio broadcasts covering the game, TV reports, extensive economic and sociological analysis, books and novels, an API, and most recently the formation of a democratic 'council of stellar management' elected by players to help give decent feedback on the game.

It is just one of many bigger studios, including Bungie, Blizzard and id, which has moved to embrace its community,

IP as budgets spiral

multi-media games projects to guarantee their survival and make better properties

Main image: CCP's new console MMO shooter Dust 514 which connects to its PC game EVE Online

Inset, clockwise from top left: CCP CEO Petursson, Ubisoft CEO Yves Guillemot, Ankama's new Wakfu XBLA title

closely manage its IP, and spread the backstory for its games across multiple mediums. (Indeed, it was fitting that both Blizzard and id's fan-focused events QuakeCon and BlizzCon, took place in the weekends bookending GDC Europe).

Yet while CCP is one of the first to create games in which share IP, users and data, it's not the only one.

French studio Ankama, responsible for the more casual and youth-oriented MMO *Dofus*, is currently growing its other IP, *Wakfu* through a mix of children's TV, browser-based MMO plus trading cards and manga. Most unique is a spin-off *Islands of Wakfu* game for Xbox Live Arcade, commissioned by Microsoft.

Ankama is, like CCP, a unique independent studio on the European games development scene. Its *Wakfu* TV show is one of France's most popular kids TV shows, and when each episode ends content is unlocked in the counterpart browser game, driving player movement and engagement.

"We are at the centre of the nexus in the cross-media experience," said creative director David Calvo during a press event at Gamescom that detailed the depth and breadth of the gameworld Ankama is creating and the variety of media it will exist in.

> ***"We are at the centre of the nexus in crossmedia gaming experiences."***
>
> David Calvo, Ankama

English marketing manager Sergio Dos Santos added: "Each MMO has to find its own soul. People play an MMO because they want to be part of it. The biggest challenge is to find that one feature that will unite your community of players."

The games industry's big fish are getting in on the act too – Ubisoft is making spin-off movies that support its *Assassin's Creed* franchise, with the main aim being to build the characters in its game IP, and also find new ways to fund it.

"Budgets will continue to keep rising just because the potential of the consoles is huge – to use all their capacity is expensive. So we make bigger games and we invest more in each game," Ubisoft CEO Yves Guillemot explained to *Develop*.

"The movie industry is very good at creating characters, so why don't we use that industry to help create characters for our games? Why don't we use books or comic books to create backstories that allow for better experiences in the game?"

Ultimately, however, the idea is not for the games industry to try its hand at multiple different mediums – but to learn from others as it expands. Added Guillemot: "The goal is not to try too many different media at once, but to make sure the interactive medium continues to grow – and a great way to to grow is to take some of the know-how that other industries have."

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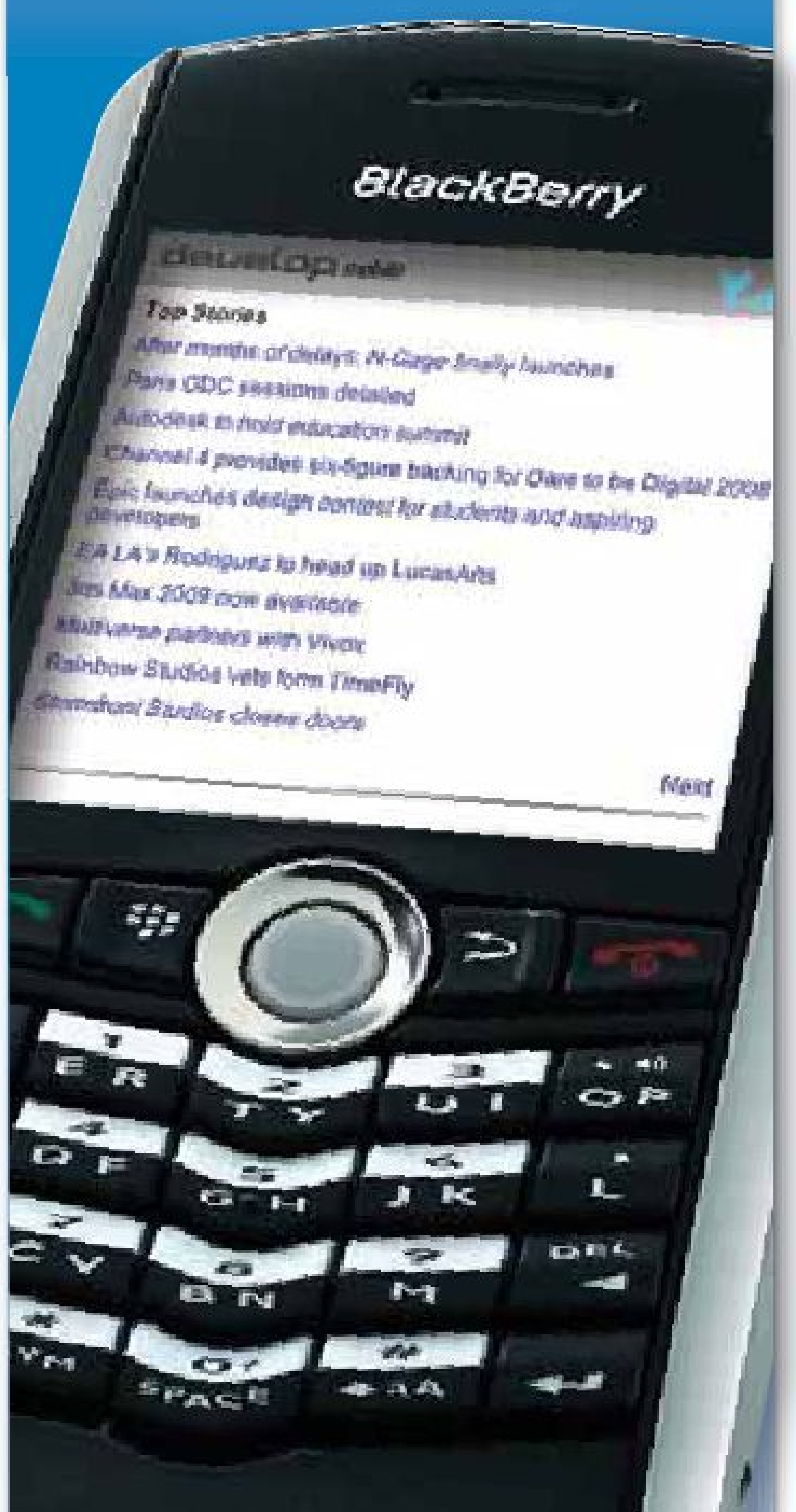

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Northern star

Plans build for November 5th's Develop in Liverpool one-day conference…

The event, which takes place on November 5th at the Arena and Conference Centre Liverpool is a focused one-day symposium that is already winning praise from across the local development scene.

Until now, studios in the North of the UK have lacked a serious conference dedicated to games development. The new location in Liverpool will help complement the bigger July event in Brighton, and also offer nearby studios in the area an easier-to-reach event.

"It's really fantastic that Develop has decided to hold a Northern conference this year," said Sarah Chudley, co-founder of Liverpool-based Bizarre Creations.

"There's a large and active section of the industry based in the North, and being able to attend Develop without over five hours travel is a big bonus for us.

"The more focused format means that it's also cheaper to attend, with less days out of the office, which is useful in these lean times. We're really looking forward to it, and would encourage anyone who appreciates or would like to experience Develop to come along and enjoy some famed Northern hospitaily and fireworks!"

First speakers and keynotes will be announced soon. Develop in Liverpool will be divided into three tracks and offer multiple networking sessions, including a post event drinks reception.

The event will take place alongside Software City, which is organised by Merseyside ICT and offers a wider view on the local IT sector.

Early bird rates are available on passes until October 12th – it currently costs just £215 for a pass to the whole event.

www.develop-conference.com/liverpool/

Casual Games Forum returns

The Casual Games Forum is returning to London, and is designed to bring together the opinion formers and pioneers of the casual games sector.

Aiming to provide analysis of current trends and future industry forecasts, the conference will also star a number of high-profile developers sharing their commercial and technical experience.

The organisers have promised that attendees can expect to gather essential information about market trends and future forecasts, get up-to-date with the latest development techniques, and discover more about a range of business opportunities. The event also hopes to provide a significant networking opportunity.

Those who book before October 5th can secure a place for £295. The one-day event takes place on October 29th at the Cumberland Hotel in Marble Arch, London.

www.casualgames-forum.com

DEVELOP DIARY

YOUR COMPLETE GAMES DEVELOPMENT EVENT CALENDAR FOR THE MONTHS AHEAD…

GAME CONVENTION ASIA
September 17th to 20th
Singapore
www.gc-asia.sg

Games Convention Asia is pitched as the 'digital media gateway of Asia', and promises to offer the only event in the Asia-Pacific region allowing those in the interactive entertainment and digital media industries to network with publishers, developers, distributors and corporate clients.

Exhibitors will be showcasing their latest products and services to the industry and public alike.

The convention strives to provide a platform on which Asian publishers, developers and distributors can present their work on a global level.

The event's conference also acts as an entry way for firms seeking to enter the Asian games market.

SEPTEMBER 2009

GDC AUSTIN
September 14th to 18th
Texas, USA
www.gdcaustin.com

GAME CONVENTION ASIA
September 17th to 20th
Singapore
www.gc-asia.sg

TOKYO GAME SHOW
September 24th to 27th
Chiba, Japan
tgs.cesa.or.jp/english

OCTOBER 2009

HANDHELD LEARNING 2009
October 5th to 7th
Barbican London
www.handheldlearning2009.com

GDC CHINA 2009
October 11th to 13th
Shanghai, China
china.gdconf.com

CASUAL CONNECT KYIV
October 22nd to 24th
Kyiv, Ukraine
kyiv.casualconnect.org

LONDON GAMES FESTIVAL
w/c October 26th
London, UK
www.londongamesfestival.com

LONDON GAMES CONFERENCE
October 27th
London, UK
www.mcvuk.com/events

CASUAL GAMES FORUM
October 29th
London
www.casualgames-forum.com

NOVEMBER 2009

DEVELOP IN LIVERPOOL
November 5th
Liverpool, UK
www.developconference.com

NEON DIGITAL ARTS FESTIVAL
November 12th to 15th
Dundee, Scotland
www.northeastofnorth.com

MONTREAL INTERNATIONAL GAMES SUMMIT
November 16th to 17th
Montreal, US
sijm.ca

DECEMBER 2009

GAME CONNECTION EUROPE
December 8th to 10th
Lyon, France
www.game-connection.com

THE DEVELOP QUIZ
December 21st
London
www.develop-online.net

FEBRUARY 2010

DICE SUMMIT 2009
February 17th to 19th
Las Vegas, USA
www.dicesummit.org

MARCH 2010

GDC 2010
March 9th to 13th
San Francisco, USA
www.gdconf.com

MAY 2010

GDC CANADA 2010
May 6th to 7th
Vancouver, Canada
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World*View*

Our monthly digest of the past month's global games news…

DEALS

Haptic feedback studio **Immersion** has joined forces with ambient effects specialist **amBX** to create a standardised SDK that will allow developers to provide for both companies' technologies .

German MMO studio **Gameforge** has purchased a licence to use tech from AI solutions company **Xaitment**.

MMO developer **Bigpoint** has turned to motion-capture firm **Xsens Technologies** to use the group's services for its upcoming game, *Poisonville*.

Bizarre Creations has secured a new partnership with middleware tech group **Image Metrics** to use its renowned facial animation services.

Emergent has struck a new deal that will allow its customers to easily integrate **Mixamo**'s 3D animation service into the Gamebryo LightSpeed engine.

THQ is purchasing **Midway** 's San Diego studio for $200,000, saving the jobs of at least 40 of the company's 100 staff.

Conduit developer **High Voltage** has paid for a lifetime license to use **Terminal Reality**'s Infernal Engine.

KOJIMA REVISITS METAL GEAR

Hideo Kojima has explained the circumstances surrounding his decision to continue working on *Metal Gear* titles, stating that 'development issues' within the *Peace Walker* project had urged him to step in.

The famed developer had suggested that *Metal Gear Solid 4* would be the last game in the series on which he would work. However, Kojima has suggested that confusion within the team working on the next PSP *Metal Gear* title propted him to return to the critically acclaimed canon of stealth games.

For nearly a decade Kojima has pledged to distance himself from all *Metal Gear* projects and instead work on new concepts. He has so far failed to keep to such promises.

Kojima Productions – a Konami-owned studio – is currently developing tech for its "next series" of games, which Kojima implied would remain tied to the *Metal Gear* universe.

www.konami.jp

UNITED STATES

EA ON THE HUNT FOR SMALLER ACQUISITIONS

One year after EA failed in its $2 billion attempt to purchase *GTA* publisher Take Two, the firm has said it is no longer interested in such large-scale acquisitions.

However, EA CFO Eric Brown says that the group is still attracted to smaller takeovers.

Brown told attendees at the Pacific Crest Technology Leadership Forum that EA is specifically interested buying franchises or online publishing technologies.

www.ea.com

SWEDEN

GRIN CLOSURE 'FORCED' BY LATE PUBLISHER PAYMENTS

After 12 years in the game development business, Swedish outfit GRIN has finally buckled under sustained financial pressure and has closed its doors completely.

According to a statement from the company's founding brothers Bo and Ulf Andersson, the developer of *Bionic Commando* has been "forced" to close due to "too many publishers delaying payments".

www.grin.se

AUSTRALIA

HALFBRICK WORKING ON QUARTET OF PSP MINIS

PSP Minis game announcements continue to surface. The Australian indie outfit Halfbrick has revealed it is developing four separate titles for Sony's new service. *Halfbrick Blast Off*, *Halfbrick Echoes*, *Halfbrick Zombies* and *Halfbrick Rocket Racing* will all soon appear on Sony's upcoming handheld, the PSPgo.

The Sony Minis scheme was announced during the 2009 Gamescom event in Cologne. The initiative offers a wide scope of developers the chance to make sub-100MB games for the PSPgo system.

www.halfbrick.com

UNITED KINGDOM

FREE RADICAL'S DOAK RETURNS WITH ZINKYZONK

GoldenEye designer and Free Radical founder David Doak has returned to games development with a new studio making *Facebook* games.

Two of the four original founders of Free Radical, David Doak and Steve Ellis, are working together again at the new Nottingham-based Facebook app company called Zinkyzonk.

www.zinkyzonk.com

DENMARK

UNITY REVAMPS ENGINE FOR IPHONE STUDIOS

The Unity engine has been significantly upgraded for those developing for the iPhone platforms.

Unity iPhone 1.5 will run up to three times faster than the prior model. Crucially, 1.5 provides full support for native Objective C and C++ code – with the engine's developer claiming this will open "full access" to the newest series of iPhones.

"We've squeezed out performance everywhere we could, and added a bunch of features to help people take advantage of the new iPhone models," said Nicholas Francis, Unity's chief creative officer.

www.unity3D.com

CANADA

ONTARIO UNVEILS £137M DIGITAL WARCHEST

Canada's Ontario province has set aside a £137 million warchest to help stimulate investment in "next-generation companies".

Game companies in the region will be eligible for the financial boost.

The scheme – entitled The Emerging Technologies Fund – is a co-development deal, which means that a portion of the £137 million pot will be given to selected companies on the proviso that the investment is matched by appropriately sized venture capitalist funding.

www.mri.gov.on.ca

JAPAN

NINTENDO IN NEW BID TO RIVAL APPS/MINIS

Nintendo is set to make fast changes to its DSiWare service in a bid to allure a new wave of indie developers.

Nintendo is set to make adjustments to its royalty and pricing policies for games on the DSi's downloadable games service.

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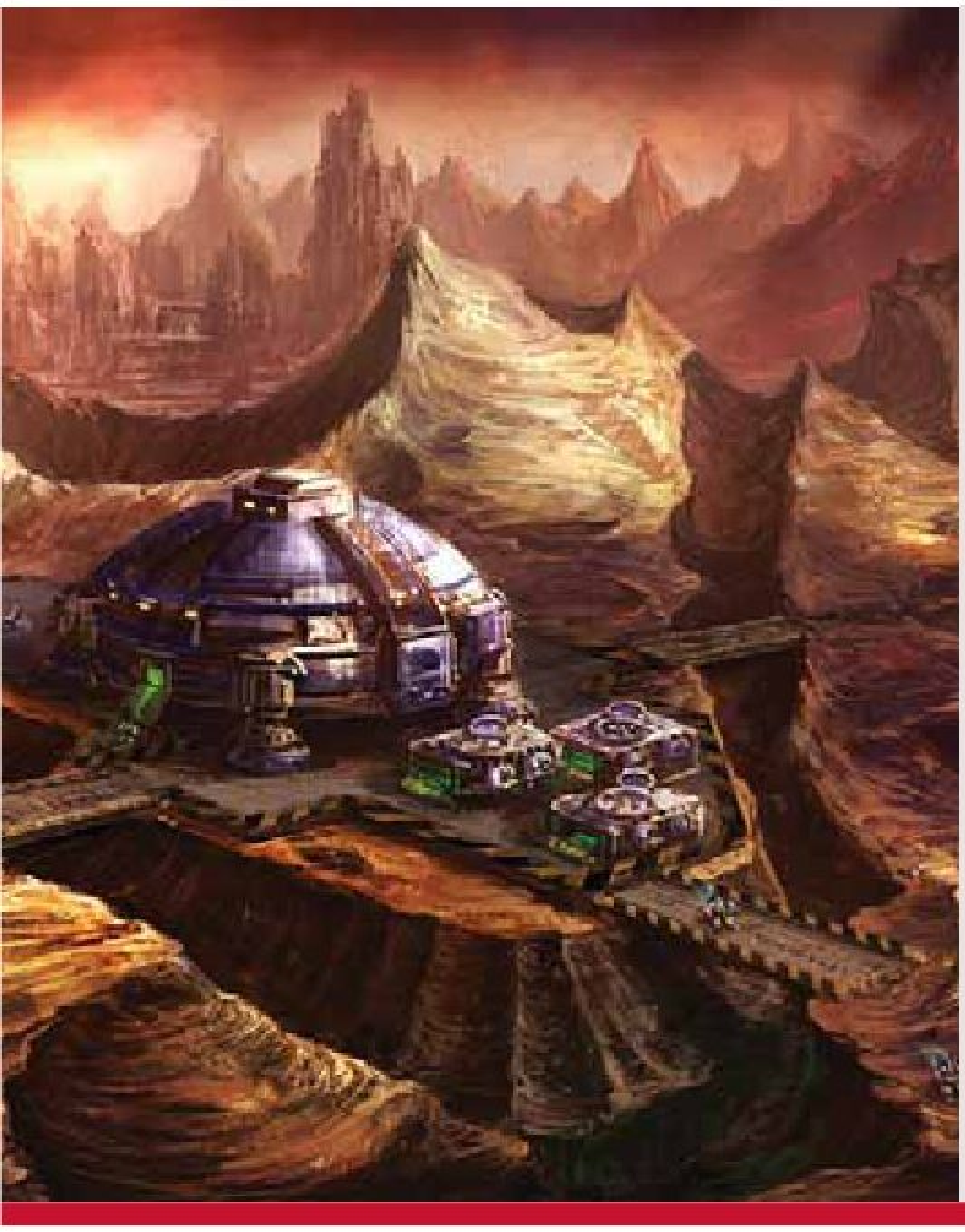


BLIZZARD'S UNVEILS STARCRAFT II EDITOR

Blizzard wowed attendees at the fourth annual BlizzCon event by showcasing its powerful and versatile *StarCraft II* editor.

During a panel discussion at the event, *StarCraft II* lead designer Dustin Browder revealed footage of three separate custom games built using the editor. One was a real-time-strategy game, another a third-person action romp and the last an *Ikaruga*-inspired 2D shooter.

Browder revealed mouse control will soon be implemented in the engine, suggesting that modders could even piece together an FPS using the editor. He said the demonstrations showed just "the tip of the iceberg" of what the editor can produce.

Blizzard apparently hopes that modders will craft some arresting custom maps and new games using the tool, as each creation can be sold through an official marketplace.

"Imagine what could happen if you could hire a small dev team and use *StarCraft II* almost as an engine," said Rob Pardo, VP of game design at Blizzard. "This is an opportunity for modders to share in the rewards of our success."

www.blizzard.com

It is hoped that this new policy will convince smaller developers there is more opportunity to turn a profit on the service.

www.nintendo.co.uk

UNITED KINGDOM

UK INDIE TUNA WINS £30K REGIONAL GRANT

UK-based indie outfit Tuna has become the newest beneficiary of a regional 'digital business investment' fund.

Tuna will receive a £30,000 grant to aid development of the studio's newest title, Cletus Clay. The funds come via Game Republic, the trade association for the games sector in Yorkshire and Humber.

"As a Sheffield-based company, it's great that we can be supported locally by organisations such as Game Republic," said Alex Amsel, Tuna managing director.

www.tunatech.com

UNITED STATES

MICROSOFT COURTING IPHONE DEVS FOR ZUNE HD

Microsoft revealed aggressive pricing for its upcoming Zune HD device last week, with plans to sell it for $219.99 - less than the price of an iPod touch.

It also seems the company is also planning to take on Apple in the mobile Apps space, by enticing developers to convert their iPhone apps to run on new Zunes.

That's according to tech blog *Daring Fireball*, which quotes an iPhone studio as saying it had been offered "a bucket of money" to port an iPhone product to Zune.

www.zune.com

GERMANY

GAMESCOM SCORES A QUARTER OF A MILLION

Around 245,000 attendees visited this year's Gamescom event in Cologne, organiser Koelnmesse has announced.

The sizeable show, which opened its doors to the public as well as the games industry, saw 458 exhibiting companies come from 31 different countries.

"The gamescom premiere ran splendidly" said Koelnmesse MD Oliver Kuhrt.

Next year's Gamescom event will take place from August 18th to 22nd.

www.gamescom-cologne.com

UNITED STATES

HALO LEAD DEV SCORES $29M FOR TOY PROJECT

Washington-based start-up Smith & Tinker has won around $29m in VC funding for its new range of games and toys based on its emerging *Pokémon*-esque online card-battle game *Nanovor*.

The company will offer a $49 handheld gadget that allows players to battle each other and upload their results to a PC via USB.

Smith & Tinker was founded in 2007 by Jordan Weisman, who was the lead designer of the first *Halo* project.

www.smithandtinker.com

Giving a DAM: Achievements

This month, **Ben Board** takes a look at how to design for optimal Achievements…

ACHIEVEMENT UNLOCKED
Wrote for Develop

ACHIEVEMENTS ARE A CURRENCY of accomplishment. They allow the developer to craft challenges and quantify the skill required to meet them, while a player's prowess across all the titles in their collection is flaunted with one unified measure: their Gamerscore. Achievements are reinvigorating the way people play, and they are helping developers understand how players are experiencing their game.

Boxed Xbox 360 or Games for Windows LIVE titles are allowed to hand out up to 50 Achievements for 1000 Gamerscore, while XBLA releases must give out 12 for 200G – both of which are extendable with paid DLC. When designing your achievements, consider and target different player types, like those Richard Bartle once suggested (Bing it!). Reward Killers for hardcore achievement, such as reaching 100 kills—but not 'Best in the World', which few can ever attain. Socialisers value communal triumphs: my favourite, 'Play against someone who already has this Achievement'. Reward Explorers who seek out different corners of your game experience, and Achievers for making good progress through its narrative. And as you grant Achievements, feel free to include your own game goodies at the same time.

Players won't thank you if you reward the loss of matches, or other negative results, because they value a clean sheet; and pathologically repetitive tasks can grate. Achievements can be marked secret, too, or designed to artificially extend play time, but beware: their appeal is very limited, as is that of games that don't schedule their rewards evenly. But humour works – I'd happily spend an evening trying to get the goalie to score.

In the docs, we suggest some Achievement categories: Carrot, Mode Exploration, Social, Hidden Treasure, Grinder, Mission Impossible, Trophy, and Scarlet Letter. Perhaps they'll inspire you.

Used effectively, Xbox 360 and GFWL Achievements help your game live longer in players' consoles and memories. Registered developers can find much more in the Achievements whitepaper and the Live Meeting presentation on XDS – or contact your DAM (if you don't know who that is, ask gamesrep@microsoft.com).

Ben Board is a European developer account manager at Microsoft. He welcomes registered developers to contact him at eudam@microsoft.com.

INDUSTRY ANALYSIS SPONSORED BY Bethesda SOFTWORKS

COMMENT: BUSINESS

Extraordinary Games Businesses 3: Zynga

by Rick Gibson, Games Investor Consulting

For the third instalment of our Extraordinary Games Businesses series, let's turn to a better-known company, the social network games phenomenon Zynga. Barely two years old, Zynga is the market leader on a games platform outpacing every other in growth of both revenues and audience.

Serial entrepreneur Mark Pincus founded Zynga in San Francisco in June 2007 to develop and distribute games for social network platforms. Pincus has been launching and selling web businesses since the early 1990s, and was the founder of Freeloader, Support.com and Tribe (one of the first social networks). His team's successful start-up background is the first secret of Zynga's success: experience and deep understanding of the social web's potential.

Facebook's decision to open its platform for third party developers in May 2007 triggered many social network game start-ups, including Zynga, SGN and Playfish. Since then, Zynga's growth has been nothing less than phenomenal. Celebrating its second birthday during a month in which its staff headcount neared 400, Zynga's game installations on Facebook alone hit 67 million and its daily audience across all networks crested 18 million unique players.

Zynga's games are all persistent, server-based and multiplayer, and accessed through Facebook, MySpace, Bebo, Friendster, Hi5 and Tagged. Its 30-odd titles are breaking little ground in terms of gameplay, but usage and revenues are being driven by catering and listening very carefully to the web's largest online communities. Its most popular games are *Farmville* (with 18m monthly users), *Mafia Wars* (15m monthly players), *Texas Hold-em* (with 15m monthly players and no cashing out), and *Yoville* (with 10m monthly users).

Most of Zynga's popular games are designed like MMOs or virtual worlds, featuring permanently free play monetised by microtransaction-based premium features plus advertising. Players pay to access certain game sessions, progress faster through games or purchase virtual goods and services. Despite being cash-rich, Zynga has raised around $40m in venture capital to date. It claims to have been profitable from month three and to have not actually spent any of this external finance to date.

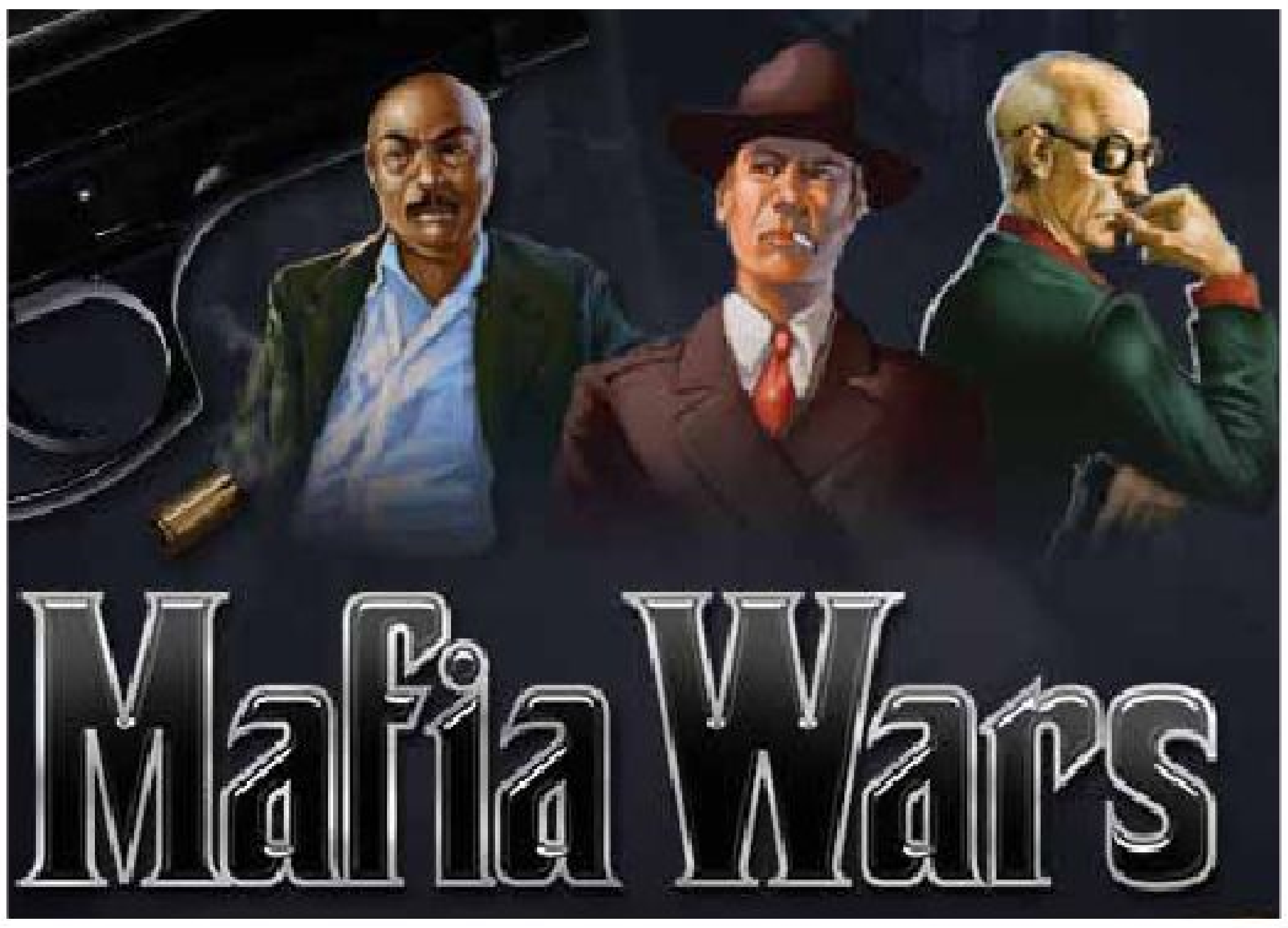
Speculation about its revenues has been feverish online, with numerous VC sources suggesting Zynga is on course to exceed $100m in 2009, recording substantial month-on-month growth. Given its user levels, which are independently verified from the source network, we believe this revenue projection to be entirely credible. Zynga, Playfish and SGN have helped the social network games market explode.

Gaming on social networks relies on virality and responsiveness. Viral propagation is built into social network games, with features which use the social network's infrastructure to assist users to connect to, and communicate with, friends. Driven by recommendations, which mean little from a stranger but much more from a valued friend or colleague, social network games rely on real friends connecting and socialising, making them powerful vehicles for viral distribution.

> ***"Zynga's growth has been phenomenal. Celebrating its second birthday, Zynga's game installations on Facebook alone hit 67 million."***

Responsiveness is a much repeated topic in our column, and Zynga is at the cutting edge of profiling, understanding and responding to its audience. Like all good online games companies, Zynga runs its games as services rather than products. Pincus says one of the key lessons learnt from earlier ventures is that data mining is critical to the company's success. Deep and granular user profiling allows Zynga to 'fail fast' and amend or ditch services and applications that are not instantly popular with its user base. 40 per cent of Zynga's games have been dropped for failing to meet its aggressive success metrics.

Before this becomes too much of a hagiography, there are three downsides to Zynga's success, all of them related to the increasingly crowded marketplace of Facebook, where around 85 per cent of Zynga's audience congregates. First, Zynga does not rely on virality alone, and has admitted to spending millions of dollars per month on advertising. As much about maintaining market share as reaching new audiences, this is an ongoing and rising cost even for such a cash-rich company like Zynga.



Above: One of Zynga's most popular games, Mafia Wars. The game entails starting a Mafia family with friends, running crime businesses and fighting to rule NYC

The second cloud on the horizon is that the league table of top-ranked Facebook applications is very turbulent indeed. This is because it's driven by a community whose interests can change suddenly and unpredictably, like the weather. Zynga is sensible to watch its stats like a hawk.

Finally, although Facebook's new in-house currency is a real opportunity, at some point Facebook could reconsider its stance on taking little or no revenue share from partners on its giant platform. Facebook's terms and conditions are constantly changing, and if Facebook decides to follow Microsoft or Apple, by taking a material percentage of revenues, this will have a huge impact on its app developers' bottom lines.

Few, if any, games companies have gone from a standing start to ten-digit revenues in under two and a half years, which makes Zynga a candidate for the fastest growing games company ever. Zynga is definitely a company to watch.

Rick Gibson is a director at Games Investor Consulting, providing research, strategy consulting and corporate finance services to the games, media and finance industries.
www.gamesinvestor.com

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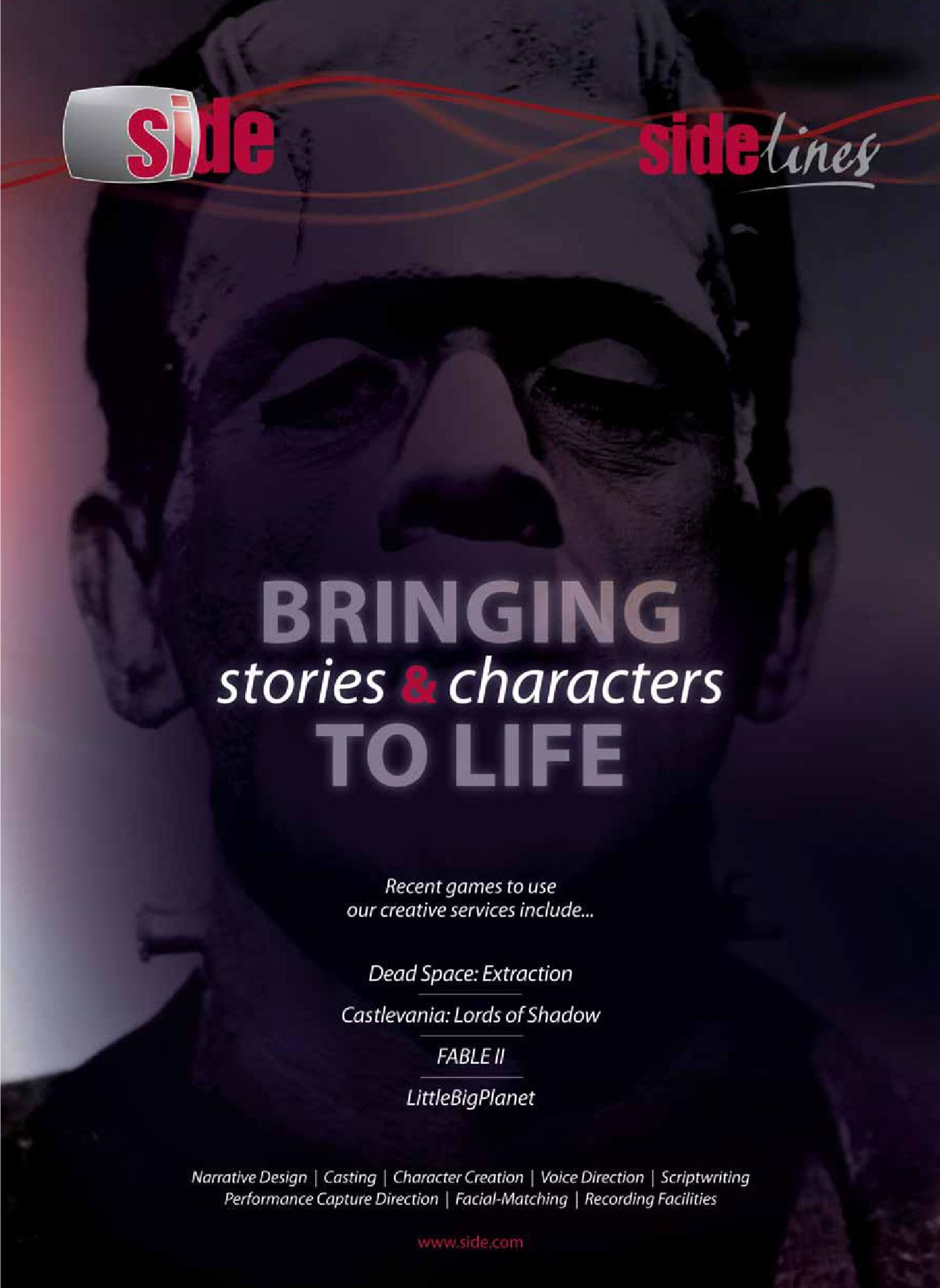

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COMMENT: INDUSTRY

You say you want a revolution

by Owain Bennallack

Dave Perry's keynote at last month's Develop in Brighton showed a slide of the first patent for a digital camera. In the 1970s, it was a curiosity – with a 0.01 megapixel resolution, it took 23 seconds to capture an image.

We know what happened next – provided 'next' spans three decades. Even in the mid-1990s, digital cameras were gimmicky, with film-less operation hardly compensating for poor quality. But the point was reached where convenience overrode digital's limitations. The fate of film, and those companies banking on it, was sealed. The warning shot was that patent.

Ironically, the first digital camera was built by Eastman Kodak, the imaging giant that flogged film well into this century. Few incumbents dare make their business obsolete.

ARE WE THERE YET?

As with cameras, so with games. There's no doubt now that digital distribution and wedding games with the internet has moved beyond its 0.01 megapixel equivalents. Do we realise it?

I'd say Games 2.0 is about where digital photography was in 1998. The technology, or paradigm, has shown its strengths: the smart money and talent are following it, some consumers are on board, but incumbent games publishers and developers still believe it's a sideshow – of relevance to casual audiences maybe, but a bolt-on to the conventional business.

Even this is better than two years ago, when people asked why we cited Facebook and YouTube in the Develop in Brighton conference programme. In contrast, this year's attendees said the online-focused Evolve day felt very much 'of the moment'.

A columnist, however, should risk being interestingly wrong rather than consensually right.

I've assumed for a decade that digital delivery will eventually replace boxed copies of games, with both single-shot purchases and All You Can Eat subscription models. I've also long believed games will become services, and that potentially only 50 or so game brands may exist – more like sports than movies – with new IPs spun-off or knitted into them.

I now ask: is this too cautious?

Dave Perry's Gaikai technology shows you can run console quality games in browsers via the cloud, albeit provided a server is in your locality. Is gaming's YouTube upon us?

Then there's iPhone, where expensive, higher-quality games have failed to establish a markedly superior pricepoint. Other things – buzz, novelty, luck, and community – seem as important, and they don't play to traditional development's strengths. It's tempting to dismiss iPhone as a niche, but it is the first entirely digital content marketplace we've seen.

Meanwhile, in South East Asia a distinct games industry has used the internet from day one. Its business model – based around PCs, free access and subscriptions or micro-transactions – is different to ours, and it's headed this way. Dozens of free MMOs and other games are already making profits in Europe.

> ***"I've long believed games will become services, and that potentially only 50 or so game brands may exist – more like sports than like movies."***

Will free, lower-quality online games supplant standalone, high cost and quality products to capture the mainstream? If you were simply to extrapolate current growth trends globally, I suspect the answer is yes.

PING PONG

You could have left Evolve thinking brands, reviews and advertising will also vanish, going on the lessons from Facebook games where users are the kingmakers.

In contrast, David Edery's closing keynote cited a study that seeded 12 distinct online communities with 40 indie tunes, and discovered quality did not 'out'. How popular a song became depended on who heard it first, and how they responded. The wisdom of these crowds looks random, leaving room for traditional marketing to tilt the table.

Dave Perry's Develop In Brighton Evolve keynote looked at the future of games distribution

Funding, that other traditional role for publishers, could also go either way. Lower quality games are less expensive to make. Yet fewer hits means making even a portfolio of them could be riskier than today's business.

Then there's the topsy-turvy revenue model of MMO/service-style games, where both income and costs must be pushed out, assuming success. Failure is costlier, faster, with little or no day one revenue.

Everything is changing, and it's not exactly clear how studios should respond. But anybody who isn't tracking real-time data from multiple instances of even single-player games and exploring A/B testing, who isn't actively looking into social networking, and who can't list 20 ways to micro-transaction-ise their next project, may soon be facing their own Kodak moment.

Owain Bennallack is executive editor of *Develop*. He edited the magazine from its launch until its February 2006 issue. He has also worked at *MCV* and *Edge*, and has provided consultancy and evaluation services to several leading developers and publishers. He is also chairman of the Develop Conference advisory board.

INDUSTRY ANALYSIS
SPONSORED BY Bethesda SOFTWORKS

COMMENT: DESIGN

The Progression of Gaming

by Billy Thomson, Ruffian Games

Progression has been a key factor in video game design for quite some time now; even the earliest games saw players completing basic tasks to progress to the next stage. Granted, it was usually the same one as the last, only more difficult, but it was progression nonetheless as they chased that elusive high score.

Over time, as consoles became more powerful, the average game player demanded increasingly complex gaming experiences to part with their hard-earned cash. This pushed many of the industry's development studios to start thinking of different ways to engage and entertain the player. Arguably the most successful method employed was the addition of progression systems that gradually opened up new features, levels, abilities and stories as the player made their way through the game, rather than a never-ending repeat of the same level. You might say that this new focus was essentially the evolution of progression based gameplay.

LINEAR LEVEL BASED PROGRESSION

Level-based progression was the most logical next step. Allowing the player to make their way through different levels with constantly changing visuals, themes and features may well be one of the oldest forms of progression – it's been around for as long as I can remember – yet it's still used more often than any other that I know of. This is most likely due to the fact that it's a familiar technique that's very easy to understand, and it's the perfect platform to deliver the sort of solid, structured story that many gamers now expect in any triple-A game.

While it is simple, I'm a massive fan of linear level based progression. Some of my favourite games of all time have built their entire game design around this system. Superb games like *Lemmings*, *Quake*, *Half Life*, *ICO*, *Portal*, *Super Mario Galaxy*, *Dead Space* and *COD4* all mastered this approach.

SKILL POINT BASED PROGRESSION

This is another method that has been around for a long time, actually pre-dating video games in the form of table top RPGs. Players are rewarded with skill points for the completion of different tasks of varying complexity and difficulty, and can then spend those points to progress their character's skills or equipment. This is tied into progress when these skills in some way allow the player to open up new sections of the game that were previously locked, now that they can complete the required task. *World of Warcraft* – one of the most successful games of all time – uses this system at its core, as do most MMORPGs.

RPGs have tended to be the main employer of this method in the past, but more and more games are beginning to use it in open world, city based games like the *Spider-man* series, *Crackdown* and most recently *Prototype*.

> ***"Xbox Live Achievements is the winner when it comes to keeping players coming back for more – an incredibly simple, yet infuriatingly addictive idea. It's a genius bit of design."***

OPEN WORLD, OBJECTIVE BASED

As I mentioned previously, a few open world games have started using skill based progression, but most others rely completely on objective based progression. This system generally has multiple objectives that must be completed before you can continue down each of the linear threads that they block. These games provide a feeling of freedom when in actual fact you're really playing a game with a linear structure at its core, with multiple side missions to provide more options, making it feel more open.

This smoke and mirrors approach is actually very successful, and has been used to great effect by some genre-defining franchises such as the *Zelda*, *Metroid* and *GTA* series. Admittedly they have all spent over a decade refining their own varying techniques and, based on the revenue and reviews they receive, you'd have to say that they've all got this approach down to a fine art.

Gaming design has come a long way since the days of Pong

In my opinion the most compelling method of progression around at the moment is not actually in any one game. It's in thousands of them. For my money, Xbox Live Achievements is the clear winner when it comes to keeping players coming back for more. I hope whoever came up with this incredibly simple, yet infuriatingly addictive idea was well rewarded, because for me and many of my friends and colleagues it's usually the draw of additional Achievement points – and of course the excellent Xbox Live service – that is the deciding factor on whether or not we buy a multi-format game on the Xbox 360, PS3 or Wii. It's just a genius bit of design, one of those devastatingly simple ideas that made me want to slap myself when I first heard about it. All I could think was: 'Why didn't you think of that?' Ah well, one day.

Billy Thomson is the creative director of newly-formed developer Ruffian Games. Billy has over 13 years experience of designing video games, including design roles on *Grand Theft Auto* and *GTA2*, before working as lead designer on Realtime Worlds' celebrated *Crackdown*.
www.ruffiangames.com

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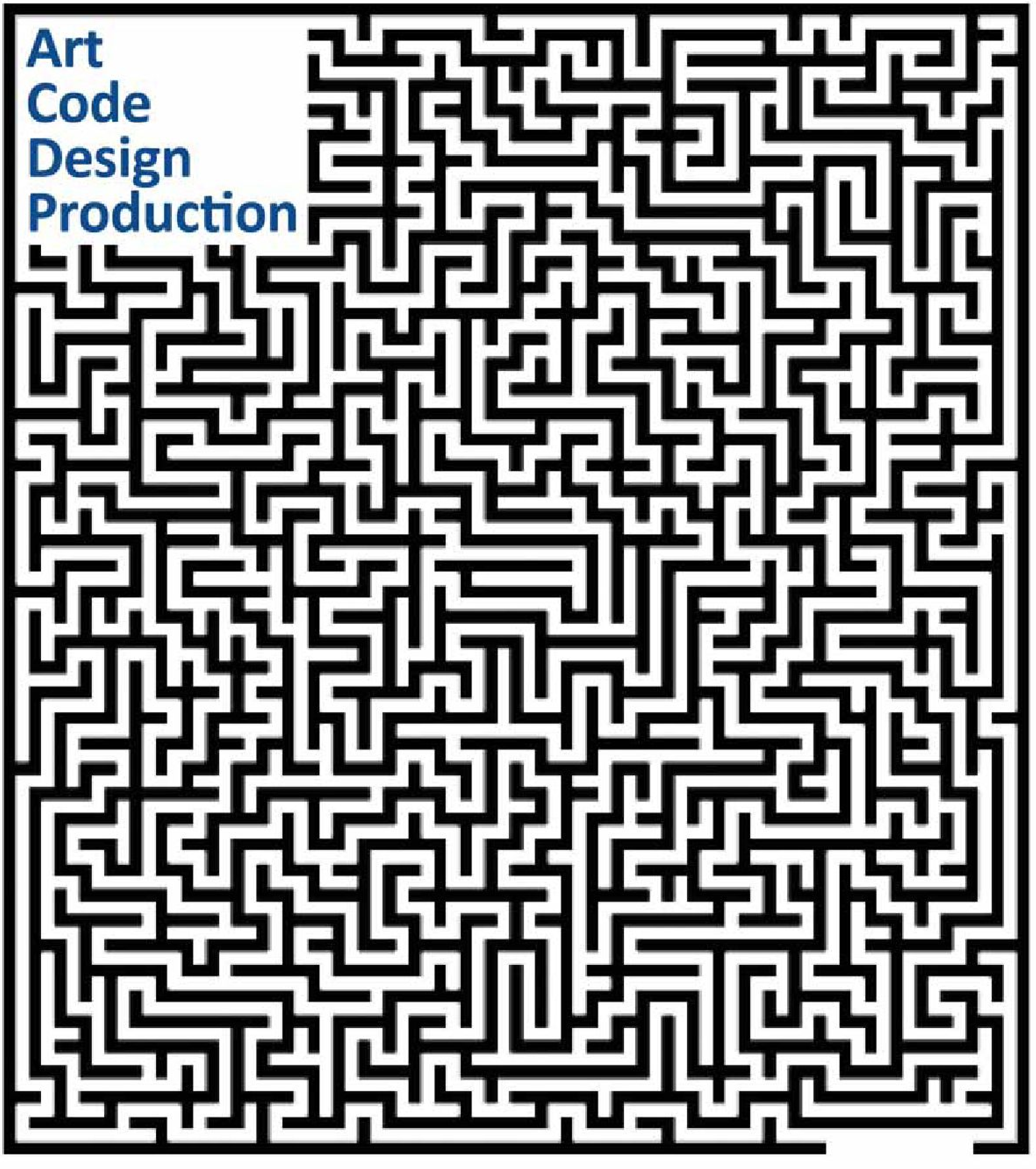
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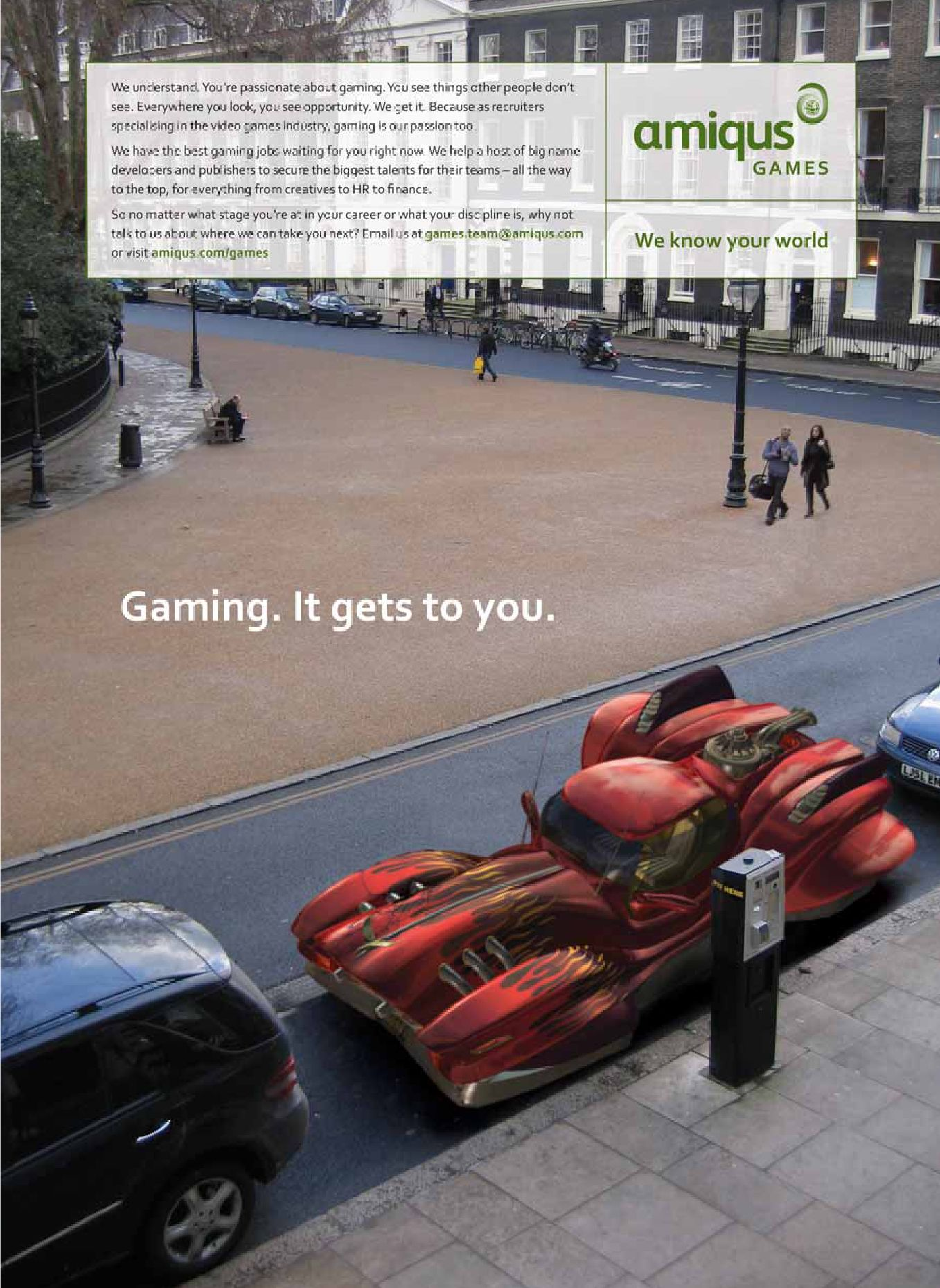


Gaming. It gets to you.

COMMENT: CODING

Where does the time go?

by Tim Swan, Black Rock Studio

As a programmer, your job is most likely split between two main activities: typing stuff into an editor, and waiting for it to compile.

If you've been programming in C++ for a while, you will be all too familiar with making a trivial change to your code, and then having to wait while the computer churns away. Time for a coffee, perhaps?

Where does that time go? Why is my code so slow to build, and more importantly, what can I do about it? Why does it take minutes, even hours, to turn your source code changes into a working result?

Like any computational problem, it's down to the amount of work and the complexity of the solution. So, let's tackle the problem head on.

OBJECT FILES

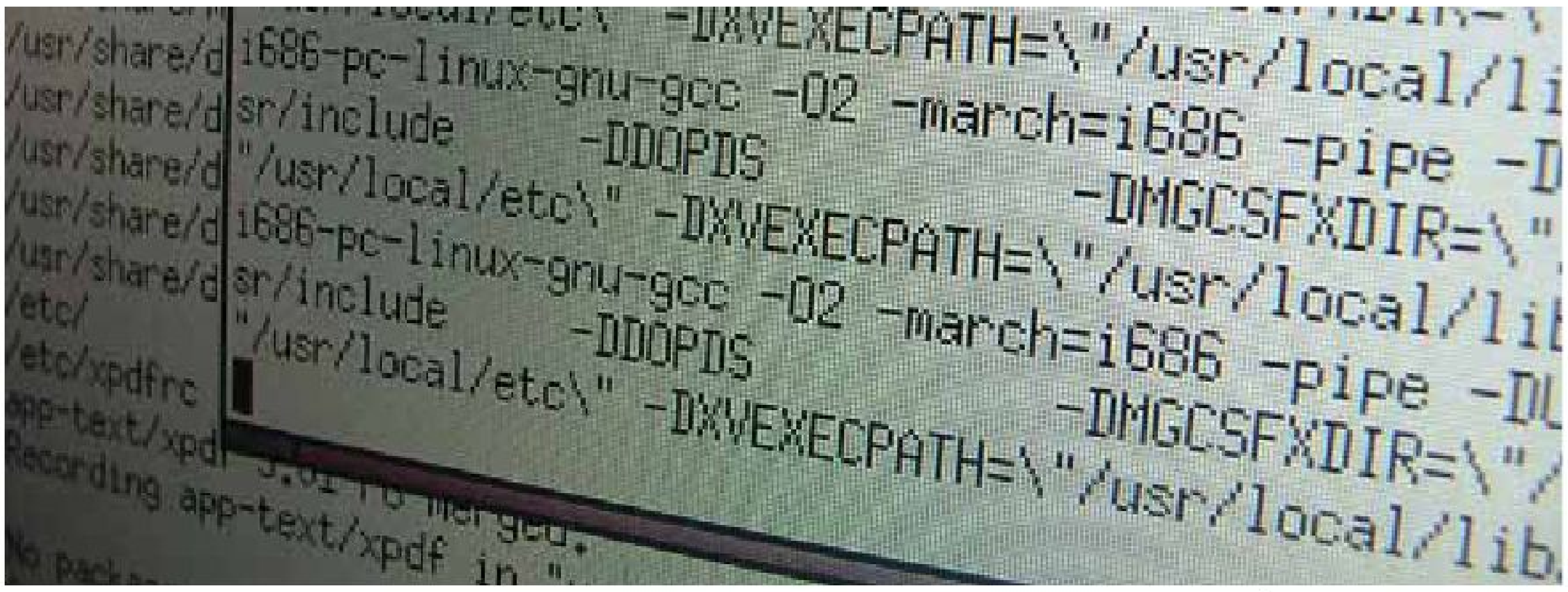
The more headers you include, the more work the compiler has to do. Hopefully, you're doing all the easy stuff already; excluding headers you don't need, correct inclusion of guards or #pragma once directives, and forwarding declarations where possible. It's worth writing some tools to look for these things – for example, an overnight brute force test compiling each file with includes commented out line by line.

Often programmers will put definitions for functions in the header file. This may be a good style choice or a method to inline code, but every translation unit that includes that header will need to be recompiled if you change the implementation. Even tiny changes can cause large rebuilds.

Also, specifying inline to most modern compilers – however you do that – is a hint, nothing more; the compiler is normally much better at making this decision than you are, so the best place to start is to separate declaration (header) from definition (source), and minimise the number of objects that need rebuilding when you change your code.

You can try the pimpl idiom, which helps reduce dependencies between translation units. This has nothing to do with spotty coders, but rather a technique to hide implementation details. If you can afford the run-time dereference cost, it's a neat trick.

Precompiled headers should be set up, and ideally you should have an automated process that works out the best contents for each of your PCH files. We tried a few different alternatives when working out the best balance between full rebuilds and one-line changes.



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LUMPING, COMPILING AND PCH

There are dirty tricks, such as including many .cpp files into one single translation unit (often called lumping or unity builds). This lets the compiler cache all of the hard work of processing all of those headers, at the expense of introducing nasty scoping bugs.

You can also parallelise and distribute your compilation, and there are some great tools out there to help with this task, including Incredibuild and Electric Cloud.

> ***"Always measure performance before you change anything, and research on how code is structured. The ultimate solution – just write less code!"***

At Black Rock, we found the best wins by using combinations of lumping and PCH, along with compiling in parallel across all local machine cores. Lumping gave us speedups in the order of three to six times faster; PCH halved this time again. Having the ability to exclude files from being built with PCH or lumping is hugely helpful if you're iterating on certain files for a long period. It is also handy to be able to compile one file in debug and the rest of your project in release.

There are not, however, many easy tricks to speeding up your link times. Incremental linking may be an option, but the only real solution is to reduce the number of libraries that you are linking together, and reducing the amount each class and object knows about other objects in the dependency graph. It's always an illuminating test throwing all of your source into a single library and finding out just how much time you are wasting linking everything together.

THE BOTTOM LINE

If you can afford it, throw hardware at the problem. We've tried ram disks, solid state disk drives, more cores and network caching of build results. All of these will help, but good profiling will tell you which one is best for you. There are also some shortcuts – for example you could use alternative languages like C# or Python, and indeed many game studios go down that route where they can.

Inevitably though, you will be trading performance in one place (compilation times), for performance somewhere else (execution times). It is important to always measure performance before you change anything, and do your research on how your code is structured. The ultimate solution, though, is really simple – just write less code!

Tim Swan has been making games long enough to call it a career. Selected highlights include *Shadow of the Beast, Destruction Derby, Rollcage*, various *Harry Potter* titles and *Pure*. He began programming professionally from a bedroom and migrated via Attention to Detail and Electronic Arts to his current role as Technical Director for core technology at Black Rock Studio.
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Is offshoring killing jobs in the UK?

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Fourplay

Why Channel 4 is using games to fulfill its educational remit – and how UK independent studios are helping it do so, p22

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The education game

Channel 4 has turned to gaming to satisfy its educational remit – and has started commissioning UK indie studios to build games that entertain and nurture young minds. **Will Freeman** sat down with Alice Taylor, the broadcaster's commissioning editor for education, to find out more…

Channel 4's London HQ

The relationship that games share with education has always been a test of the industry's horizons.

At face value, designing titles to nurture the minds of future generations contradicts developers' more blood thirsty creations, and only reinforces the view of those who deride the proactive potential of gaming.

Despite Nintendo's recent efforts to broaden gaming's acceptance, the idea of 'educational games' probably perplexes most consumers, despite the clear benefits the medium offers to children.

And developers who dabble with teaching are often seen as harbouring a dirty secret. While BBC Micro titles like *Podd* and *Granny's Garden* fuel rose-tinted memories for a certain type of person now active in the industry, the very same demographic is typically cynical of those studios that turn to the dark art of 'edutainment' and its kissing cousin, casual gaming.

It's hard to deny that, generally speaking, gamers themselves – and consumers in general – are suspicious of the merits of educational content; no one wants to be lectured to.

UK broadcaster Channel 4 wants to change all that, however. As part of the long running television company's obligation to its public service remit, it is required to create educational content. The channel, famously responsible for some of the more cutting-edge and exploratory TV fiction and non-fiction content, has turned to games as a way to reach new audiences.

But this isn't just box ticking by big media: Channel 4's efforts have lead it to the doors of a number of UK indie developers. And the result has been very surprising indeed.

SKOOL DAZE

Alice Taylor is Channel 4 Education's commissioning editor and subsequently at the forefront of the broadcaster's newly realised dedication to proving the worth of educational games as not only a tool for learning, but as a way to promote interesting, creatively risky products that showcase innovation and originality.

Taylor previously worked for the BBC and, as proof of her geek cred, was a member of the UK's first Quake team. Anybody who meets her needs little convincing of her faith in games as a vehicle for education, and as she points out, she's by no means the first to recognise the medium's potential.

"I'm not an academic, so I have not personally done any studies on the merits of games educationally, but there are plenty of them out there.

"There's Raph Coster's entire book *The Theory of Fun*, there's Henry Jenkins and then James Gee. There's a whole swathe of academics who have said time and time again that games teach. Extending that, there's the idea that 'games teach, so you'd better know what you're putting in them'."

Taylor's latter point is something Channel 4 clearly takes very seriously. The fruits of its labour have not only won the hearts' of their intended audience, but have been recognised by a host of awards, including a BAFTA for the most high profile game from the broadcaster, *Bow Street Runner*.

Traditionally, Channel 4 had focused its commitment to education on broadcast content. The company's latest strategy, which technically launched in late 2007, started with an annual budget of £6 million, a considerable part of which was devoted to televised output.

While Taylor is keen to point to the fact that education happens across Channel 4's schedules, and is ingrained in the likes of reality TV and other high profile programs, her and her immediate colleagues are charged with tackling the problem of delivering tailor-made productions for 14-to-19-year-olds – a group increasingly hard to reach by traditional means.

> ***"To reach the 14 to 19 year olds we took all of our investment and moved it online to support television on the web, mobile and games projects."***

"The specific, public-service ring-fenced remit bit was 'broadcast in the morning, at 9.30 through till 12 midday during the week'," says Taylor, explaining why television broadcasts floundered in delivering an educational message, and attracted far less viewers than hoped for. "Now at that time 14-to-19-year-olds are at school, or at college, or in work. We were maybe picking up the unemployed or sick.

"So we took all of our money and moved it online, at which point we did, and still do, a number of things. For example, television on the web, mobile projects and games."

And so Channel 4 moved most of its educational commitment from television screens to computer monitors. Thanks to the ongoing economic crisis, and the subsequent effect on the advertising budgets that are Channel 4's lifeblood, in 2009 only £4.5 million has been put aside for education. But still approximately half of that finds its way to the pockets of the independent developers lucky enough to secure deals with Taylor and the team at Channel 4.

The games the broadcaster commissions err away from including explicit content from the standard curriculum, and instead address issues identified as important to teenagers in the UK today.

Alice Taylor is pushing Channel 4 to explore the boundaries and overlap between educational content and games

"It's broad themes that turn up during your teenage years," explains Taylor.

"Themes like sex, drugs, alcohol, relationships, mental fitness and depression. These weird and wonderful subject matters are really exciting to explore."

And they are themes usually untouched by traditional games developers, which means that currently a diverse range of studios are toiling away on some rather atypical projects.

Zombie Cow is one-man UK developer Dan Marshall, currently at work on a cheek-prodding sex education game by the name of *Privates*, which sees diminutive marines clearing genitals of sexual infections.

Also underway is an unnamed title by Beatnik Games, a small team based a short work from Channel 4's iconic HQ in central London. Still in development, the game looks at why so few girls follow science through to a career level.

Already live on Channel 4's website is Littleloud's aforementioned historical point-and-click detective adventure about the dawn of the police force, *Bow Street Runner,* and *Routes*, a series of games which explore the importance and ethics of genetics and identity.

INDEPENDENTS' DAY

Moving forward, Channel 4 is concentrating on using teams with between one and 25 employees. "One reason is cost, so the budgets in our case range from £40,000 to £800,000," reveals Taylor. "For £800,000 you can't get a triple-A team, but equally it's an overwhelming amount for one person in a bedroom, so that dictates the size of the teams we go for. That's the practical reason, and it's that simple."

However, financial realism isn't the only motive behind Channel 4's choice to use small, young studios. The other reason is that, according to Taylor and her fellow employees, indies are best suited to create the quality, creative educational games that the broadcaster prides itself in promoting.

"I think that indies do deliver a superior understanding of what makes for a better educational game, and in saying that perhaps I'm going to upset those in the educational serious games area," says Taylor.

"I'm generalising massively, but I think if you start of with the learning, and try and apply a game to it, it sometimes works, but in many cases it just doesn't. But a game has to be fun – it has to be magic. You can put learning into a game, but it's very hard to put a game into learning. I don't really know why. I don't personally have enough hands-on experience developing games to explain it, but it seems to me that when you play a game that has set out to be educational in a very specific way, it just tends to be hard going a lot of the time. We haven't had a breakout hit from the serious games side of education. Meanwhile, in the games space there's breakouts all over the place."

Along with the Education department, the website of Channel 4's youth-orientated channel E4 is also employing indies to make games. The E4.com editor, Jody Smith, has supported game development through a number of initiatives, including the Great British Summer of Games online festival, and the Grand Master Flash design competition.

Smith certainly shares Taylor's opinion that indie studios are best suited to develop products for the television company, and has another interesting point with regard to what small studios can offer those eager to host original, innovative web games: "What a lot of people don't appreciate is that these bedroom developers often have a really loyal following, which is very unlike what any agency has, generally speaking.

"Fans are talking about them already, so when we actually launch their games, they're going to be bringing in an audience, and an audience that probably don't watch E4. Their reputation is really good, and they bring with them respect. That's the reason sites like Kongregate and Newgrounds have such great followings."

It's clearly evident that Channel 4's loyalty to indies is absolute, and while they have commissioned content from agencies before, it seems that for the foreseeable future the smallest studios are set to reap the benefits of working with the broadcaster.

There are other benefits the new educational gaming movement offers indies, too. The positive end goal of the projects is certainly perceived to be a bonus, and the creative freedom Channel 4 cultivates is something each of the teams it has worked with seems to appreciate.

> ***"Perhaps I'm going to upset those in the serious games area, but indie developers do deliver a superior understanding of what makes a educational game."***

"I think education is a great niche for indies," says Robin Lacey of Beatnik Games.

"The beauty of indie games is that they set out to achieve something greater than the end credits. They have purpose and, as an indie studio, we couldn't think of anything more rewarding than using gameplay to actually make an impact in people's lives."

"Channel 4 have been completely amazing," adds Dan Marshall from Zombie Cow. "There's pretty much free reign to be as blisteringly creative as you like. Everything from the initial pitch onwards has been my idea – with minor tweaks from Channel 4 about precisely how rude we can get away with being, that sort of thing. Pushing creativity seems to be at the forefront, and they really 'get' what games are about, and what can be done with them."

MORE FOUR?

It may come as a surprise to many that, while Taylor won't completely out rule the idea, Channel 4 is hesitant to exploit the IP of its more famous programmes for the use of games. Sadly for fans of late-night dramas, that means there's little chance of getting the commission for a *Skins* Flash game.

"That's something the indies love," says Taylor. "If you go to them and say that you want a *Hollyoaks* game, that's one thing, and you know the boundaries and the limitations, but if you go to them saying you want a game about sex, while in some cases they'll run off crying, in many cases their eyes will light up. That certainly happened with Dan at Zombie Cow."

Put simply, those currently making games for Channel 4 – which presently also includes Six to Start, Tuna Technologies and Preloaded among others – are given a chance to build their own IP from scratch, without having to put any mind to ongoing game sales. Channel 4 takes ownership of that IP, but it typically reverts back to the developer after five years.

"You also get an incredible sense of satisfaction in making something that you know has intrinsic value," adds Taylor.

BEATNIK GAMES

YEAR FOUNDED: 2008
HEADCOUNT: 7
KEY STAFF: Robin Lacey, Damien Cerri
CURRENT PROJECTS: *Plain Sight* and an untitled C4 project
URL: www.beatnikgames.co.uk
EMAIL: info@beatnikgames.co.uk

"We're currently working on an untitled game that aims to get teenage girls into science based subjects and careers," explains Robin Lacey, when asked about his team's work for Channel 4.

Inspired by the fact that only one-in-eight girls who gain an A-star in double science GCSE go on to select a scientific subject at A Level, Beatnick, which is based in London offices not far from Channel 4, is presently dividing its effort between the educational commission and its independent project, *Plain Sight*.

"We thought it'd be a great idea to get teenagers into the mindset of what science is like, and felt that a video game would be the easiest way of doing so," adds Lacey. "Not only is it a medium that the demographic understands, but also the very process of playing a game is about problem-solving, learning from your mistakes, understanding underlying complex systems, and developing your skills to navigate those systems."

LITTLELOUD STUDIOS

YEAR FOUNDED: 2000
HEADCOUNT: 15
KEY STAFF: David Jacklin, Darren Garrett
PREVIOUS PROJECTS: *Bow Street Runner*, numerous flash games to support some of Paramount's biggest movie releases including *Transformers 2*, *Watchmen*, *Eagle Eye*, *Iron Man* and *Kung Fu Panda*; *Kerwhizz* for CBeebies, *Humf* microsite produced for Nick Jr
CURRENT PROJECTS: *Horrible Histories, G.I. Joe, Tourists from Mars* children's TV show
URL: www.littleloud.com
EMAIL: bigchief@littleloud.com
TEL: 01273 625066

In Littleloud's nine years the studio has created an amazingly diverse range of titles, from TV ads and virals to animated television and promotional materials.

In terms of gaming, the team's most successful, recognised output is the BAFTA winning Channel 4 commission *Bow Street Runner*, which has become something of a champion of the new school of educational gaming. A combination of live action and classic point-'n'-click adventure gameplay, the tale of the dawn of the UK's police force has set a standard for other Channel 4 clients to match.

Littleloud is owned by executive producer David Jacklin and creative director Darren Garrett. Together the pair have produced award winning broadcast and interactive content across the movie, TV, and entertainment sectors.

"When you make a game and you know that not only is it fun and good to play but it's also good for the person playing it, it's slightly magical. You get a really strong sense of satisfaction that you've done your job really well. The people that have made them so far have loved it and want to do more. I think you don't get the same cynicism about why you're doing it, which is great."

These new wave educational games are clearly beneficial for all involved, and their recognition at gong shows further cements their reputation. It's not all blue skies though, and aside from having to fight for attention with console games, television, social networking sites and mobile phones, Channel 4's games have another, rather more serious threat to face; the current economy.

"There is nothing on this planet that is safe for now," admits Taylor, "But as things go, Channel 4 Education's output in the past couple of years has performed far better than television ever did. It's got a lot of attention and it's got a lot of positive feedback from both teachers and from the industry. In the Digital Britain report the stuff that Education is doing was noted as being what Channel 4 should do more of."

An obvious way to grow its reach, and revenue, is porting or creating games for the likes of XBLA and iPhone; something Channel 4 is beginning to look at seriously.

"The only reason that we haven't done that yet is because our games have to be free at the point of consumption for UK players," reveals Taylor. "The web is really easy, as is PC and Mac download. XBLA, PSN and WiiWare are all guarded, gated communities and you have to go through somebody and get permission to a degree. However, our plan with the Zombie Cow game *Privates* is to get it on the Indie Games Channel. That's the easy way to get on XBLA.

"iPhone is slightly different because while every teenager has a console, six months ago very few of them had an iPhone. Quite a lot had an iPod Touch, but it was only really the rich kids in school and the few prepared to spend everything on one piece of technology."

Taylor predicts that this Christmas will increase the number of young adults with iPhones exponentially; meaning Channel 4 may consider the platform more seriously next year. Waiting for the New Year, however, creates a classic catch-22 situation for Channel 4, as in just a few more months it will be even more difficult to stand out from the throng on Apple's overcrowded mobile platform.

> **"*When you make a game and you know that not only is it fun and good to play, but it's also good for the person playing it, then it's slightly magical.*"**

CHANNEL VISION

However, as things stand Channel 4's drive is proving remarkably successful, be it with developers, teachers, students or parents. And if other companies charged with a responsibility to educate take note, what was once defined by the reputation of edutainment may now become a fertile proving ground for new indies.

The last word goes to Taylor, who is resoundingly confident that Channel 4's new relationship with games will just gain momentum: "The first three games out the gate for us are doing so well in terms of reception and numbers. The quality of the content is so good, I just think it is going to work. We will have a game at some point that will either be too 'classically educational', or one that is so damn fun it might be really hard to unearth the education in it. Overall though, you'll play them as you play *Bow Street Runner* and the games in *Routes*, where you realise 'these are really fun games, and I just learned something'."

Which means means Channel 4 should have succeeded in its goal.

ZOMBIE COW

YEAR FOUNDED: 2008
HEADCOUNT: 1
KEY STAFF: Dan Marshall
PREVIOUS PROJECTS: *Gibbage, Ben There, Dan That!, Time Gentlemen, Please!*
CURRENT PROJECTS: Privates
URL: www.zombie-cow.com
EMAIL: dan@zombie-cow.com

"I'm currently working on a sex education game for Channel 4 about a squad of teeny tiny marines clearing peoples' rude areas of sexual infection, called *Privates*," explains Dan Marshall. "It's a sort of parody of all that gung-ho Space Marine nonsense the video game industry seems to be so hung up on, and definitely falls into line with the direction Zombie Cow Studios is going – to produce quirky comedy titles."

The work Channel 4 has taken to Zombie Cow's door has allowed Marshall and those he recruits for individual games to continue the studio's tradition, which started with lo-fi point 'n' click adventure, *Ben There, Done That!*.

Apparently designed with the hardcore in mind so as to deliver the game's message without a hint of edutainment, Marshall assures *Develop* that *Privates* offers "this awesome balance between something that'll not only actually teach you a bit about why catching syphilis is a bad thing, but can also get away with anthropomorphising the disease into something that makes for a playable and funny game."

SIX TO START

YEAR FOUNDED: 2007
HEADCOUNT: 8
KEY STAFF: Adrian Hon, Dan Hon, Lisa Long
PREVIOUS PROJECTS: *We Tell Stories*, *Young Bond: Shadow War*, *Liberty News*, *Muse: Ununited Eurasia*, *Landshare* (with Mint Digital)
CURRENT PROJECTS: *Smokescreen* for Channel 4 Education, *Misfits* for E4
URL: www.sixtostart.com
EMAIL: hello@sixtostart.com
TEL: +44 (0)33 3340 7490

Six to Start's history lies with alternate reality games, and in particular the commercial ARG *Perplex City* started by the firm's founders at previous company Mind Candy.

The London studio, based in the same building as Beatnick Games, is currently at work on *Smokescreen*, a 13-part web adventure that explores ideas about online identity, privacy and trust.

Players are charged with delving into a mystery on a fictional and interactive social network that parodies the problems that arise on the likes of Facebook, MySpace and Bebo.

"It's so nice to make games that are good for people," says Six to Start CCO Adrian Hon. "It's nice too, to be able to go and meet the teachers and parents, and to say: 'This is something that is good for your kids, and it's also really fun, and you won't really have to convince them to play'. That doesn't just help us – it helps everyone realise that games can be good."

Crying wolves

Ten years have passed since Cevat, Avni and Faruk Yerli founded Crytek. Here, the trio shed light on the company's progress and their hopes for its future…

As you draw close to your tenth anniversary, what do you think is your greatest achievement as a company over that period?
Very interesting question. Let's put it this way: the journey is the reward and we have come a long way. It's the 'Crytek way' that is our biggest achievement. Our games and our technology have gained us the respect of gamers and our industry. We worked very hard to achieve this, and we built that company and the whole Crytek family on the three values: trust, collaboration and respect.

Those values define and guide our everyday work. We trust our vision, our dreams and the talents of our Crytek family, and believe that we're all heroes in our own right. Collaboration enables our teams to make or break goals. Our heroes strive to contribute in ever more meaningful ways to our gamers, our communities and industry. That, in our eyes, is the biggest achievement of Crytek so far.

Why did you decide to start to licence out your internal tech?
To be honest, at the beginning that wasn't a priority for us. We just wanted to have a proprietary engine for our games projects. The first companies contacted us in 2002, and said they wanted to licence CryENGINE. That was a great honour for us and, after a bit of thinking, we started to establish our licensing business and just a short time later had several licensees.

Today, engine licensing is a very important part of our daily business. It continues to show us every day what the CryENGINE is able to do.

Crytek has always been devoted to the cutting edge. Placed as you are in that position, what do you expect to see from the next 'next-generation' platforms?
The new generation of consoles will definitely blow our mind. We'll experience not only all-new graphical fireworks but also a lot of impressive new functionality.

Our CryENGINE 3 is already next-gen ready and allows studios to develop cutting edge games for this generation and the next generation of consoles. It can deliver top-notch quality on all platforms now, and you can have a head start on development for the next generation. We want to be prepared for the future while also delivering for this generation.

What motivated your decision to expand into the UK?
The decision to acquire Free Radical came up at the end of 2008. The combination of our CryENGINE technology and the experienced, skilled team was more than perfect for us and was highly attractive. We think the team fits into our culture and strategy very well, as Free Radical has a proven track record in developing games on consoles and PC. We always planned to enter the console market and open a studio in the UK, and that was part of our strategy even before the acquisition.

What plans do you have for the studio?
When we acquired Free Radical, we were really impressed with the development talent they have and their console experience. What we expect is that the team will make kick ass games under the Crytek umbrella.

Are you considering establishing a new presence in any other countries?
Well, I think we currently have a very strong studio network with our studios in Budapest, Frankfurt, Kiev, Nottingham, Sofia and Seoul. We are always looking into all possibilities. But at the moment we are not actively looking for a new presence.

> ***"We always planned to enter the console market and open a studio in the UK."***

What makes a career at Crytek so special for your employees?
At Crytek we're always looking for talented and skilled developers who understand that making games is more than just a job. Everybody who joins us here at Crytek joins a highly motivated, talented and experienced team.

What attracts people to work at the company?
We're convinced that a good and healthy team in a unique culture is the key to succes; it offers a lot to our employees. Besides a competitive salary and bonuses schemes, Crytek offers a very refreshing atmosphere in an multinational English-speaking team.

We also apply the 80/20 rule: our employees are allowed to use up to 20 per cent of their work time to pursue ideas outside their projects. In many cases people from different departments are working together and carrying ideas further. Through this, we're killing two birds with one stone: we're holding the creative potential and the entrepreneurial spirit up, and in particular beginners can show their specialities, which helps us support them by specific education.

In addition to that, we also offer flexible work time, good health care benefits and relocation support. All in all, Crytek is a great place to work and we're always happy to welcome new members to our Crytek family.
www.crytek.com

DEVELOP INSIDER
For more on Crytek's engine and global presence, check out our Develop Insider.

CRYTEK'S STUDIOS

CRYTEK UK (NOTTINGHAM)
Purchased by Crytek after Free Radical Design went into administration in 2008, the Nottingham studio is working on a new IP that marries the powerful CryENGINE 3 with its known creative streak, as previously seen in titles like *TimeSplitters* and *Second Sight*.

CRYTEK GERMANY
The company's German office is the centre of all its operations, from which it not only develops game titles but also grows the engine licensing side of the business. It's also where the Yerli brothers are located, choosing Frankfurt for its cluster of innovative and creative companies, with which Crytek has many partnerships. Cevat Yerli says that the team is working on 'several dream projects' and that it 'isn't committing to a certain genre or platform.'

CRYTEK HUNGARY
Led by Kristoffer Waardahl, Crytek Hungary's multi-cultural workforce is toiling away on a 'thrilling new IP' with Avni Yerli saying at the time of opening that it was 'a great way to develop for a new gaming genre.'

CRYTEK BLACK SEA
Bulgarian developer Black Sea Studios, as the outfit was known prior to Crytek's purchase in 2008, is best known for PC games like *Knights of Honour*, and is credited with the advancement of co-op in RTS games. Based in the country's capital city of Sofia, it's at the forefront of Bulgaria's advancement as a game development territory.

CRYTEK UKRAINE
Founded in 2006 in Kiev with six artists and two managers, the Ukranian arm of Crytek has now, thanks to its stellar assistance on Crytek Germany's *Crysis*, expanded beyond just art assistance and into a full studio of its own right, now featuring over 50 people including experienced programmers and designers.

CRYTEK KOREA
Based in Seoul, Crytek Korea is dedicated to supporting and exending the adoption of CryENGINE 3 in Asian markets – traditionally where Crytek's engine has seen the most uptake, powering many MMOs. Many experienced online operators, QA staff, marketing experts and network engineers are based here; in the city at the heart of the online game revolution.

Media darlings

In part two of our CEDEC coverage, **Develop** talks to Media Molecule's Siobhan Reddy about her Japanese influences and cleaning up at the Develop Awards…

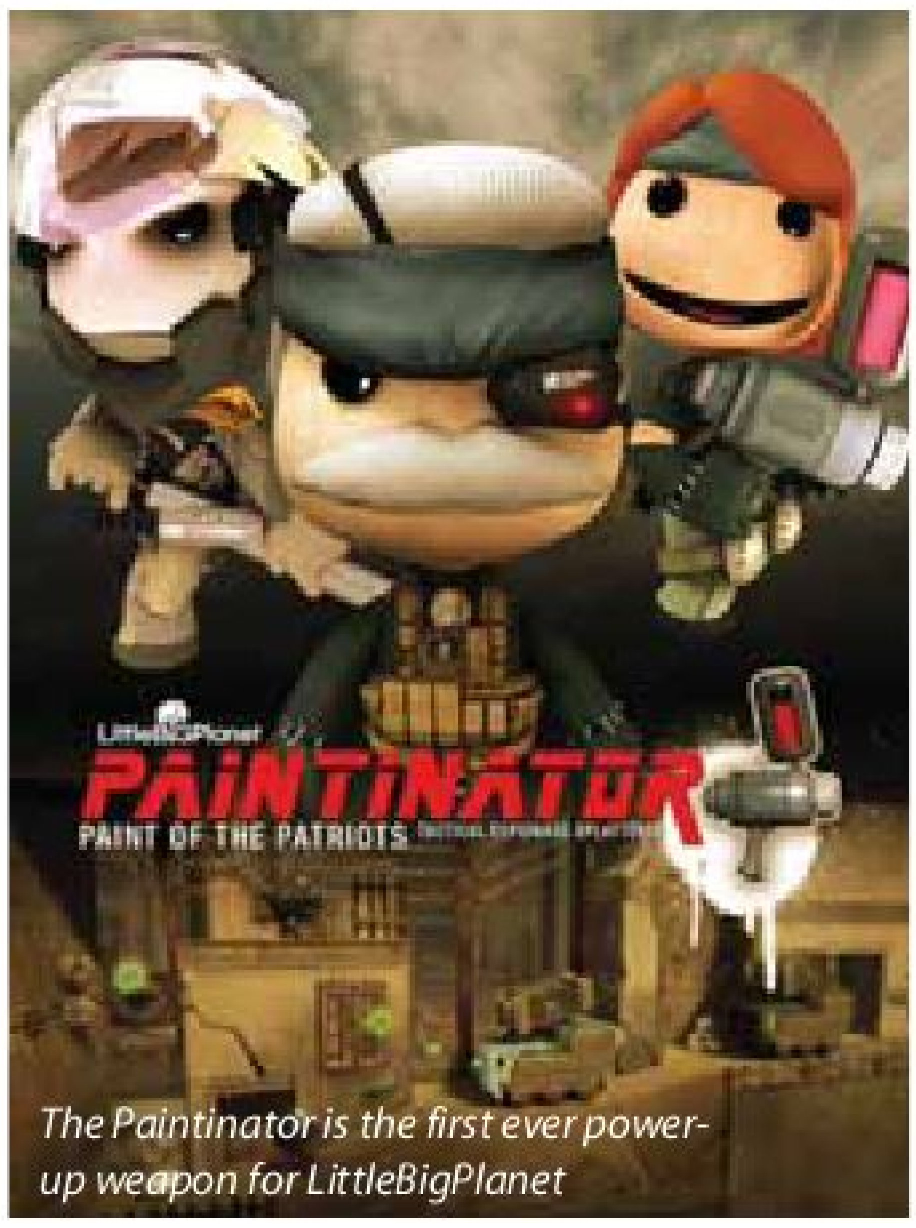
Inset: Sackboy Sephiroth, based on the character from Final Fantasy VII Below: Media Molecule's Siobhan Reddy

Above: Media Molecule's unique game, LittleBigPlanet, enables consumers to play, create and share their gaming in an amazing platform adventure

Hello, Siobhan. You're talking at CEDEC this year – what brought that about?
I've really loved my visits to Japan. Each time I've been there I feel like I've learnt something new and been incredibly inspired. It felt fitting to go to a conference and see the Japanese industry in action.

Your talk is about the creation of Media Molecule – what things will you be aiming to cover?
I want to cover the things that were important to us when starting Media Molecule and how they influenced the making of LBP.

You're also nominated for a couple of CEDEC Awards – how does it feel to be recognised by the Japanese games industry?
It's an incredible honour. Japan is the centre of the universe of gaming for a lot of the Molecules. As a western developer it's very exciting when the game you are working on appears in a Japanese magazine, let alone being nominated for awards at events like the Tokyo Game Show and CEDEC.



The Paintinator is the first ever power-up weapon for LittleBigPlanet

> ***"Japan is the centre of the universe of gaming. It's exciting when the game appears in a magazine, let alone being nominated for awards."***

Are you going to clear up, like at certain other award shows?
[Laughs] I'm sure our amazing luck must be starting to run out by now! We have been incredibly overwhelmed by the recognition we have had from the industry. When we have encountered hard times, it's been our community and the support we have had from the press and the industry at large that has helped us through. So, thank you!

Speaking of which, how did the team react to winning so many Develop awards?
If you combine the humbleness of the Brits, the champagne drinking of Aussies and Scots and the whooping of Americans, then you can probably get an idea of what our parties have been like. We are very proud, and very thankful for the support we have been given by the industry. I hope we have inspired some young start-ups along the way.

You've actually worked together with Japanese companies before on DLC for LittleBigPlanet – notably the awesome Metal Gear Solid pack and the Square Enix costumes. How have these collaborations been for you?
They have been amazing. In fact, when we were in the US late last year we were introduced to Kojima and he told one of the level designers that he loved the design of the *Metal Gear Solid* pack. Danny was very proud, so for that moment alone the collaboration was worth it. Also, they have been very fruitful. It's obvious that our community really love *Metal Gear Solid* and were hungry for the diversity of content the collaboration allowed. When working with an IP we make sure they add something to the *LittleBigPlanet* universe, and the *Metal Gear Solid* collaboration is one of the best examples of this.

In what respect is the work divided? Is it all carried out by you guys and approved by them?
We work with great outsourcing teams; Fireproof, Tarsier, Leading Light and Testology. All of these have become an extension of *LittleBigPlanet* and have helped us deliver the huge amounts of content. We have a team of people here at Media Molecule whose main responsibility is managing the DLC. They work closely with the outsourcing teams, Sony and the companies involved, to make sure the end result is great. Each company's approval process is different.

Are there any other developers or licenses – Japanese or otherwise – that you and the team would like to work on?
Definitely Hayao Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli!

CEDEC AWARDS

Now in its second year, the CEDEC Awards look to celebrate the creativity and talent of games developers across the world – and European developers are represented in force this year...

■ PROGRAMMING / DEVELOPMENT

CryEngine development team, **Crytek**
"For always seeking cutting-edge 'next generation' techniques, such as programmable shaders and procedural technologies"

Sonic Unleashed development team, **Sega**
"Applying global illumination in a real-world game"

Silicon Studio
"The application of programmable shaders"

Little Big Planet development team, **Media Molecule**
"For the realisation of world-class graphical quality"

Shadow of the Colossus development team, **Sony Computer Entertainment**
"For real-time deformation collisions and the display of brilliant graphics"

■ VISUAL ARTS

Crysis team, **Crytek**
"For the portrayal of nature's spectacle in Crysis"

Naruto Ultimate Storm team, **CyberConnect 2**
"For the application of anime techniques to games"

Okami team, **Clover**
"For the creative application of ink painting expression in games"

Epic
"For the direction of real-time dynamic cutscenes through the game engine"

Little Big Planet team, **Media Molecule**
"For the realisation of a world-class unique graphical style"

■ GAME DESIGN

Balance Board/Wii Fit teams, **Nintendo**
"For the creation of a device that opened new possibilities for game design"

GTA 3 development team, **Rockstar North**
"For innovating game design in the open-world genre"

Brain Training team, **Nintendo**
"For designing a game that resonated with untapped markets"

Monster Hunter Portable team, **Capcom**
"For designing a game that made use of co-operative play with friends"

Little Big Planet team, **Media Molecule**
"For fusing physics simulation with user-generated content"

■ SOUND

Soul Calibur 4 team, **Namco Bandai**
"For the implementation of wonderfully balanced audio"

Resident Evil 5 team, **Capcom**
"For the team's pioneering workflow, and how they used this to create delicate aural spaces"

Lost Planet team, **Capcom**
"For utilising dynamics in surround sound to draw the player into the game world"

Ridge Racer series team, **Namco Bandai**
"For the utmost utilisation of each platform's capabilities, despite being launch titles"

Rhythm Heaven team, **Nintendo**
"For moving 'sound games' to the new stage of 'rhythm games'"

■ NETWORK

Virtua Fighter 5 Arena team, **Sega**
"For taking the fighting game online"

e-AMUSEMENT service team, **Konami**
"For offering a great online service for arcade games"

NicoNico team, **Niwango**
"For the realisation of a new way to have fun on the internet"

VCE development team, **Community Engine**
"For creating a cross-platform network game engine"

Shin Sangoku Musou team, **Koei**
"For realising the exhiliration of the offline series in an online game"

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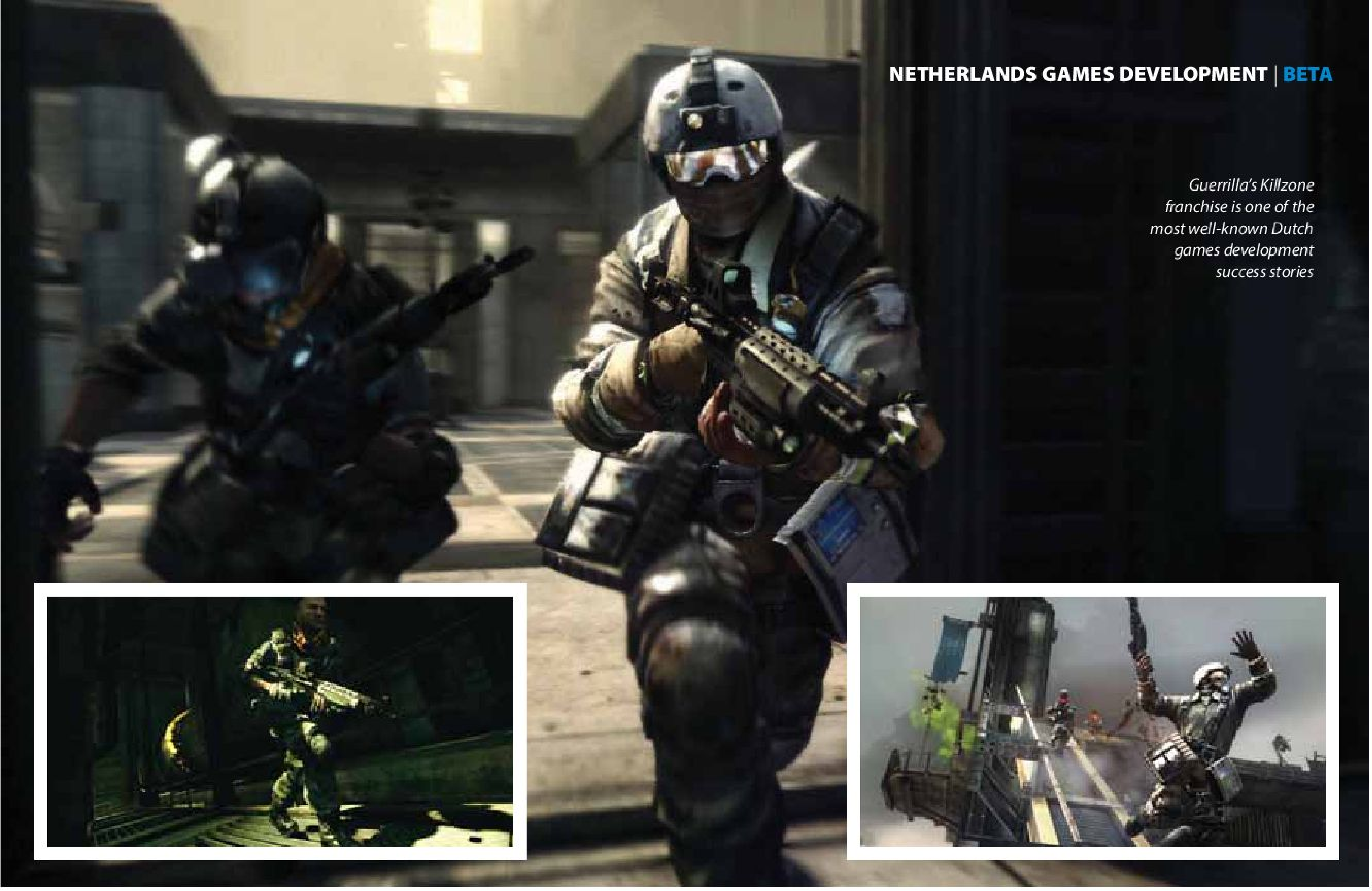

Guerrilla's Killzone franchise is one of the most well-known Dutch games development success stories

The Dutch Invasion

Who better to ask about the growth and success of the games industry in the Netherlands than its most famous development team, Sony-owned Guerrilla? **Michael French** spoke to MD Hermen Hulst about the region's successes and thoughts on the future…

How have you seen the games industry in the Netherlands develop in recent years?
I've seen tremendous growth in the Dutch games industry, to the point where there are now over one hundred companies operating in this sector. Many of the newer development studios are start-ups, created by students and graduates from Dutch educational institutes which offer games-related courses.

At the same time, the development studios which have been around for a while are gaining increased international recognition. Triumph Studios, for instance, has established itself as a stable, triple-A developer with the *Overlord* franchise. Streamline Studios, a digital content solutions provider, has built up a solid worldwide reputation as a quality outsourcing studio.

(Continued on page 34)

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Asset Server Developer
Technical Writer
Forum/Community Developer
Website Content Developer
System Administrator
AI Programmer

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GOING DUTCH

A guide to the key firms in Holland's games industry...

KEY COMPANIES

Guerrilla Games
Sony-owned console games developer
www.guerrilla-games.com

Xsens
3D motion tracking products and motion capture systems
www.xsens.com

STUDIOS

Codeglue
Downloadable games studio
www.codeglue.com

Ex Machina
Social game technology firm
www.exmachina.nl

Gamedia
Developer of MMOs, casual games and console titles
www.gamedia.nl

Kalydo
Developer of 3D browser games
www.kalydo.com

Project Stealth
New studio making stealth multiplayer titles
www.projectstealthgame.com

Real Games
Casual games giant
www.real.com

Rough Cookie
Developer of *Star Defense* for iPhone
www.roughcookie.com

Triumph Studios
Creator of the *Overlord* series
www.triumphstudios.com

Two Tribes
Developer of original games and advergames
www.twotribes.com

Virtual Fairground
Browser games and virtual worlds firm
www.virtualfairground.com

W!Games
Downloadable games developer
www.wgames.biz

Weber
Casual games firm
www.webersg.nl

PUBLISHERS

Iceberg
New PC and console games publisher
www.iceberge-interactive.com

Playlogic
Publisher of games like *Xyanide*
www.playlogicint.com

ADVERGAMES

Flavour
Specialising in games supporting ad campaigns
www.flavour.nl

Little Chicken
Advergaming specialist
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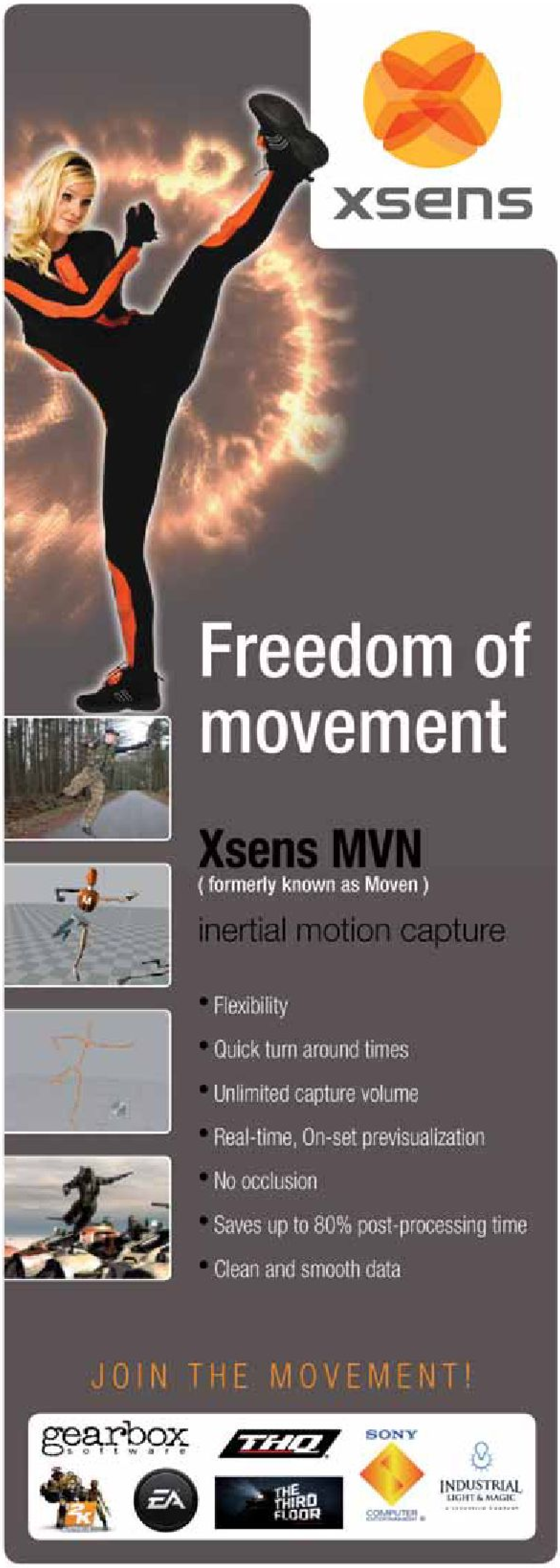
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Government grants in Holland have helped stimulate its local games industry, says Hermen Hulst, MD of Guerrilla Games, which is best known for the Killzone franchise (pictured above)

(Continued from page 31)

What support has been available to studios in the region from local regional development/support agencies?
To stimulate the development of games in the Netherlands, the government now offers grants to developers who meet the requirements. We've also witnessed the creation of several support agencies in recent years: the Dutch Games Association, an umbrella organization which represents the interests of the Dutch games industry; the NLGD Foundation, which aims to position the Dutch games industry internationally; and the Dutch Game Garden, which focuses on industry growth. The agencies organise frequent conferences to encourage industry co-operation and knowledge exchange.

In what ways do you think the Dutch games industry will grow further?
I know of some very promising start-up companies, and I hope to see them grow into strong international players in the coming years.

More competition within the industry means there will be a larger ecosystem for new graduates to learn the ropes in. I believe having such an ecosystem is vital for a healthy industry.

In what ways did the switch to PS3 impact your production processes? What changed at the studio in terms of investment and technology?
The switch affected us in a lot of ways. Apart from the professionalisation of Guerrilla in the years between our last release on the PlayStation 2 and the release of *Killzone 2* on the PlayStation 3, the technological leap required us to review and improve almost every facet of our development process.

> **“*There are some very promising start-up companies in Holland. I hope to see them grow into major players.*”**

For example, the high-definition nature of the PlayStation 3 meant that we had to create assets at a much higher level of detail. The console's focus on online connectivity also required that we pay greater attention to the multiplayer component of the game.

Happily, our first-party status afforded us excellent technological support from Sony Computer Entertainment's dedicated support teams, such as the Advanced Technology Group and ICE. This helped us get up to speed with the hardware very quickly.

What effect did that have on staff – both in terms of how the current employees worked and also how you have expanded the team?
The studio has doubled in size since the launch of the original *Killzone*. We hired talent from abroad to fill highly specialised roles, as well as bringing in veteran experience. We also employed a lot of local talent, to give them the opportunity to mature.

Is it hard to attract talent to the Netherlands?
It's always a big step for people to move to a different country, but typically once candidates have been to the studio for an on-site interview, they recognise the charm of working in a 17th Century mansion on the canals of Amsterdam.

Also, for many developers working at Guerrilla is a rather pleasant way to have an expatriate experience. Even though the official company language is English, more than a dozen different languages are spoken here, so it is easy to feel at home.

We all know Guerrilla for its work on the Killzone titles – but what's next?
I can't really talk about it yet, but it's safe to say that we have started on several new initiatives and projects to support the Sony platforms. More will be revealed at a later stage.
www.guerrilla-games.com

NETHER REGIONS: HOLLAND'S GAMING HISTORY

Think Holland is all windmills, clogs and legal recreational substances? Or that its games development scene consists of just one or two studios? Read on for a brief history of how the Dutch rose to prominence and influence…

Like many areas of the European games industry, Holland's development sector has its roots in the demo scene of the late '80s and early '90s.

But despite its relatively diminutive size – compared to neighbours Germany, the UK or France – the country's gaming reach and variety in the last 20 years is considerable.

The nation has turned out massive blockbusters (*Killzone* is developed by Sony-owned Guerrilla, interviewed above), key iPhone games (*Star Defense*, made by new studio Rough Cookie and published by Ngmoco) and digital titles (new WiiWare game *Swords & Soldiers* is developed by a new start up studio).

It's also home to one of the firms trying to pioneer in the burgeoning cloud gaming space – Dave Perry's hotly touted Gaikai platform is developed by a Dutch company.

Not bad for a games industry that employs under 2,000 staff.

Here we offer a brief history of the region, marking out the key events and key companies.

KEY DATES

1984: The first home-grown games are published, largely for the Commodore 64. The computer was a huge success in Holland, having a 100,000-plus unit installed base in the country at its peak. A huge demo scene built up around the C64; it was the Dutch scene which is often said to have helped kick-start the movement before it spread to the UK and France.

1987: Text adventure *Horror House* is published for the PC.

1994: *Jack Jazzrabbit* is published. The game was co-made by Epic's Cliff Bleszinski (who went on to design *Gears of War*) and Dutch developer Arjan Brussee. Brussee had been spotted on the demo scene by Tim Sweeny, Epic Games' co-founder, who was impressed with his 286/386 PC engine demo.

1996 *Christmas Country is* developed for the CD-I. Perhaps not Holland's most memorable title, what stands out is its production: the game was made by four students in their final year of university.

The country has a good reputation for education-based games talent – *de Blob*, which was eventually remade for the Wii by THQ, was originally conceived by a group of students from the Netherlands.

1997: Triumph Studios, which went on to develop the *Overlord* series, is founded.

2000: Multimedia conglomerate Lost Boys forms a games division out of three Dutch studios including Orange Games (founded by Arjan Brussee, Jazz Jackrabbit's co-creator). The studio started out making games for the GBA and Game Boy Color. Three years later it was sold off and renamed Guerrilla Games.

2000: Two Tribes is founded. Starting out on Nintendo's portables and mobile platforms, the studios has in time grown to release its own IP via WiiWare.

2001: Casual games firm Zylom is founded. The company is acquired by Real in 2006 and renamed RealGames in 2008 – it has been key to the country's growth of stature in the casual games space.

2002: Utrecht School of the Arts starts to offer the first qualification focused on game education in the Netherlands.

2004: *Killzone* is released by Sony. The game was developed by Guerrilla, which was bought by the format-holder the following year, 2005.

2007: The Netherlands' games sector becomes a €1bn industry – surpassing its local film sector.

At the time, trade association the NLGD said games were growing 50 per cent faster than any other industry in the region.

2009: A raft of Dutch-made titles are released on a variety of formats, including *Killzone 2* (PS3), *Overlord II* (multi-platform), *Star Defense* (iPhone), and *Swords & Soldiers* (Wii).

VIDEO GAMES RUINED MY LIFE. Good Thing I have Two Lives Extra
Seriously...
me

Offshoring can definitely benefit studios: here's Monumental's Indian team, with the Fast Growth Business Award 2009. That's David Tolley right in the middle.

'Shore leave

In the first feature of our outsourcing special, **Ed Fear** takes a look at whether offshoring work outside of the UK is killing domestic art jobs…

As the times change, so do the articles. A feature on outsourcing two years ago would have been espousing the benefits and drawbacks of shipping work outside of your company walls: is it as easy as it sounds? Are the cost savings as good as they seem?

These days, you'd be hard pressed to find a developer that isn't engaging in the practice to some extent. Be it openly or on the quiet, with external partners or exclusive satellite studios; the increasing cost in art assets has meant that outsourcing is, to most, the only possible way of keeping up with the international Joneses.

LEAVE RIGHT NOW

But as it becomes more common, so too do the potential downfalls that offshoring brings. One of the big problems is that, because outsourcing is often done to cut costs, it's usually shipped overseas – to where operating costs, and by extension job rates, are lower. What that means is that work is leaving the country – and, some say, contributing to a drain of opportunities for talented people away from the UK.

One such person is Recruit3D's Fran Mulhern. Working in the recruitment sector, he says that he's noticed a dramatic reduction in the opportunities available for artists and animators in the UK.

"I've seen it when trying to find jobs for artists, and also seeing the amount of art vacancies out there – it's nothing compared to what it was a few years ago. We're shipping the donkey work overseas, but this is exactly the same work that, a few years ago, junior artists were cutting their teeth on. Now, we're just not training them here – we're training them overseas."

> ***"We're shipping the donkey work overseas; the work that, a few years ago, junior artists were cutting their teeth on."***

Peter Leonard from Amiqus agrees that there's been a decline, but points out that junior artists and outsourcers fulfill different roles at different times in the project.

"The increase in outsourcing the production of game art assets has had an impact on the number of entry level candidates that some studios invest in," he says. "An important note to make, however, is that the benefit of outsource studios is primarily during the full production cycle, where they're either outsourcing or hiring contractors because they're only required for a temporary period. Most studios do still value the benefit of investing in talent that are then a part of their studio and can provide support in all areas of development rather than during full production."

SAVING GRACE

In fact, some – such as Kevin Hassall, from outsourcing agency Beriah – believe that, while the practice is contributing to a reduction in certain opportunities domestically, offshoring has enabled many developers to keep afloat in a time that's seen huge losses in all sorts of sectors, let alone high-risk (and cash-delayed) sectors like game development.

"Obviously, offshoring adds up to a lot of work not being done in the UK. Anyone who is looking for a UK-based job where they're basically going to build or refactor assets is going to have a tough time finding work right now – and the situation will get worse for them, not better.

"That includes graduate artists, for example, since junior art tasks like environment art, vehicle modelling and simple optimisation can all be handled very effectively offshore. It also has the potential to have an even bigger impact on music and

sound guys, and in time the trend will affect coders as well.

"But, on the other hand, there are UK studios today who are only in business because they've been able to use offshore partners and suppliers," he says. "That adds up to a lot of jobs saved in UK studios who would otherwise have gone bust. I wouldn't want to have to estimate whether on balance more jobs have been safeguarded or lost by offshoring."

As mentioned earlier, outsourcing is about finding talent that's doesn't need to be trained up, nor kept on a permanent contract; it's flexible enough to fit in to the flux as projects wind up and new work is sought. David Tolley is offshore manager for Nottingham-based Monumental, which has recently ramped up significantly both at home and abroad, via its own satellite studio in India.

"Obviously cost can be a major factor when deciding to outsource, but the fact is that the UK has nowhere near enough skilled artists to fill the roles currently taken by external developers. It can take years to train as a good game artist, so outsourcing is a great way to hire specialist skill fast."

Monumental uses resources in India to supplement its UK operation, rather than replace it. Through doing that, the studio is able to work on more than one massively-multiplayer online game at a time, when few have the resources to work on even one in the UK.

"Without the offshore option I think we'd be seriously understaffed and in future we wouldn't be able to compete," he admits. "It's not a magic solution, but it can certainly reap benefits when planned carefully alongside our UK operations."

There's also the issue of what to outsource as well – and, given that many aspects of game development need instant feedback and constant iteration, the time difference and distance mean that certain things can't be efficently managed from abroad.

"It's much easier to assign, track, and give feedback on single game assets as opposed to managing an offshore pipeline where level building and creation are involved," Tolley continues. "Often this part of development needs daily interaction with design and production departments as well as managing hundreds of individual assets, which makes it impractical at present.

PURE SHORES

Of course, it's important to remember that outsourcing and offshoring aren't synonymous, even if the former may often imply the latter. In addition to renowned and established outsource services in the UK such as 3D Creation Studio, many smaller developers across the UK act as unsung heroes through contract work, especially those looking to fund their own adventures into new IP.

Beriah commonly uses talent from the UK, says Hassall: "In fact, the most common country for us to place work into is the UK. If we're building a full development it will almost always have a 'western' component, usually UK based. Not only that, but for specific tasks and sub-projects, a UK team will often be the most effective option."

> ***"The UK has nowhere near enough skilled artists to fill all the roles taken by external developers."***
>
> *David Tolley, Monumental*

While Monumental doesn't use UK outsourcers currently, it has done in the past. "Definite plus points are the communication and locality. It's easy to hop on a train and be with the studio in a matter of hours to hammer through any issues. Some UK studios only source UK talent – most of whom have a background in the industry so are very capable and understand the process the game-assets will go through. Other studios use the UK as a base and use art teams from other parts of the world so can be cheaper."

Regardless of the benefits, some people worry about developing an increasing reliance on resources from abroad will lead us to lose out when those emerging markets begin creating global-facing products themselves.

"We're just not training artists here – we're training them overseas. What will happen when overseas takes their art skills and starts using them to produce their own games?" questions Mulhern. "What happens when they become so focused on their own stuff, or on dealing with domestic clients – because if art's cheaper over there you can bet that coding will become cheaper too – that they decide they're no longer interested in doing our dirty work?"

Tolley has heard the argument before, and points to the Monumental model as proving that these resources don't have to be treated with suspicion; they can be brought internally, so any training done benefits the studio both now and in the future.

"The 'us and them' attitude is a recurring theme in discussions about outsourcing, and it can get a bit tiring. In my opinion we need 'them' as much as they need 'us'. The great part of having an offshore studio is being able to integrate that team into the company as a whole. We've had the whole team over to our headquarters in Nottingham and we're all on the same intranet, reading the same emails, and so on. We're not 'teaching the Indians' – we're training our staff."

Hassall refutes the argument from its origins: we're not the ones teaching them.

"Can anyone seriously suggest that the MMOs that have emerged in China and Korea, the casual games from the Ukraine and the FPSs from Eastern Europe are all with us only because some superior westerner has condescended to teach Johnny Foreigner how to do it? That's patronising, and it's bollocks. There are two billion people in China and India alone, and a lot of them are clever enough to work stuff out for themselves – and they have done already."

At the end of the day, globalisation is with us. That means that a British team or company has bigger markets and more opportunities, but more competitors as well. We're all happy to embrace the positive side of that. We'll just have to get used to the negative side, too – because this is a tide that we don't get to fight against."

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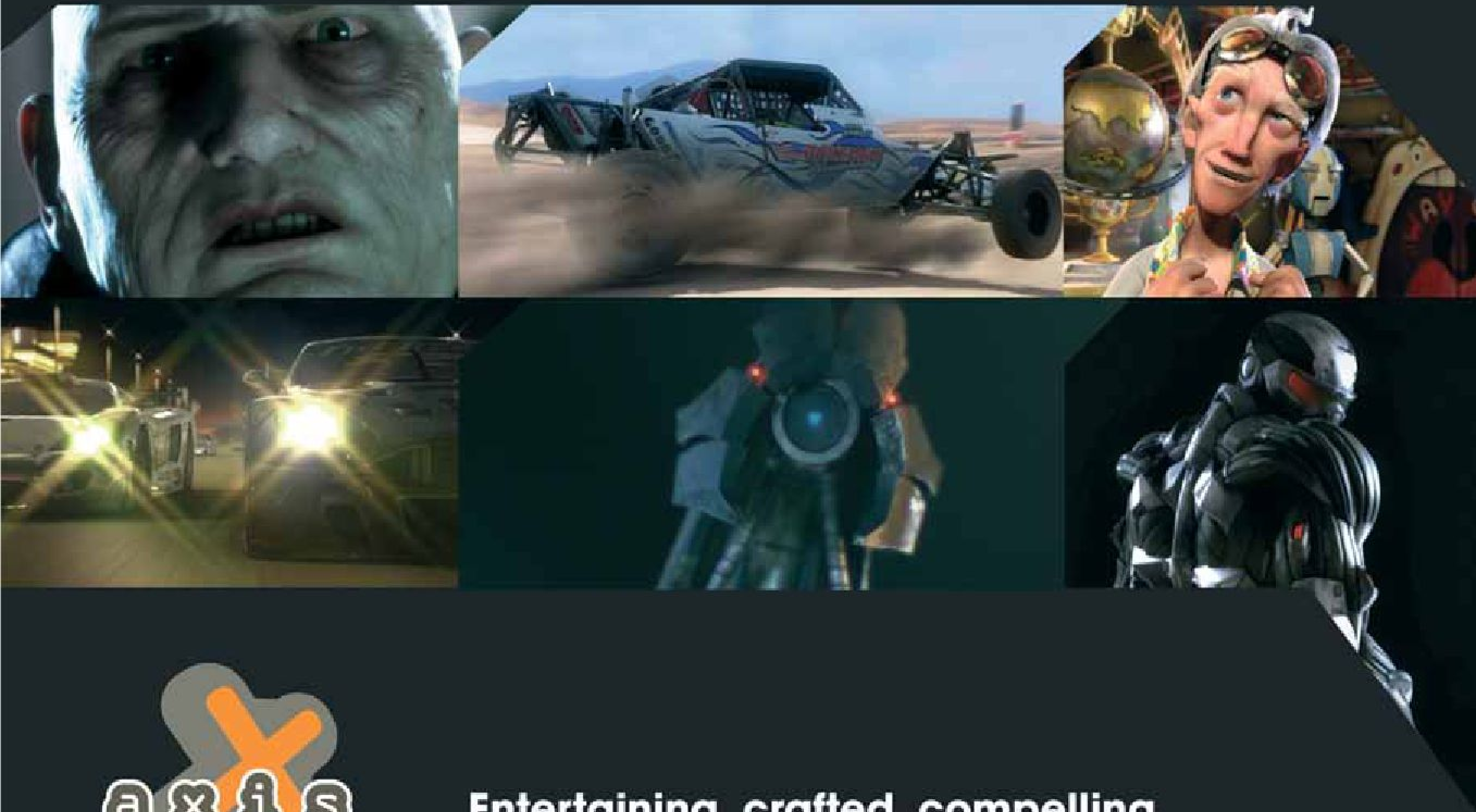

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Outsourcing 101

Catalyst Outsourcing's **Ivan Davies** discusses how to make sure outsourcing doesn't end up taking up more time than it saves…

Ivan Davies is an industry veteran of over 20 years.

As our industry's aptitude for business matures and we seek to weather the current financial storm, both developers and publishers are looking for ways to deliver better games in as short a time as possible. The days of the super-developer may be at risk, as the commercial reality of the traditional model – that sustaining a 100-plus workforce through those months of perpetual green-lights and reviews, all the while eating away at the rainy day cash reserves – looks more and more like suicide. We all need to work smarter to get the most out of that publisher dollar.

Smart teams are using outside assistance to meet their deadlines, as game content is being outsourced and being created by an ever-growing network of talented service providers. When done correctly, this approach lets developers cost-effectively extend the size of their teams without the need to find and train the new people.

Everyone is outsourcing. Well, okay; not everyone is, but Tiga's recent report discovered that 83 per cent of UK game developers outsource at least one business process. The reasons for outsourcing are numerous: to improve a team's performance, to hit dates, to save money and ultimately to make better games.

Given the current financial climate, this outsourcing trend will increase. In other creative industries, outsourcing is an established strategic business tool. Ask a developer or publisher about outsourcing, however, and you'll probably get a Marmite answer – 'the best thing since bread came sliced' or WYGIAPOS.

There are many accounts of outsourcing failing, but it mainly does so due to immature processes on both sides of the engagement. At Catalyst we still receive work requests from developers who would willingly begin £50,000 worth of work with less than half an A4 sheet brief. You wouldn't give a builder £50k and expect him to build you a kitchen extension based on a few magazine photos, so don't expect an outsourcing company to deliver quality work without a quality brief, realistic planning and prompt feedback. Outsourcing is increasing because the standards have improved – vendors deliver what their customers want. Good vendors work with their customers to ensure the tightest work brief, as the deal needs to create winners on both sides of the table.

A good contract is the foundation for outsourcing successfully. This needs to be an agreement that works for both parties and reflects the operating reality of a long-term relationship; a reality that must look past the commercial aspect of getting the work done as cheaply as possible. If the vendor is on the back foot from day one, they will have to cut corners to retrieve any profit. I want my outsourcing partner totally focused on value creation and not spending their time trying to break even.

> ***"Publishers don't let developers just get on with making the game, they check up. It's exactly the same for outsourcing."***

Following a recommended test piece, you begin the delivery phase and it's all systems go; time to sit back and let the outsourcing company get on with the job while you concentrate on the game's in-house development. See you in six months with all assets game ready, right?

If only that was the case. Unfortunately, that's still an approach seen even today. They believe that now the contract is signed, the work test completed successfully, everything will fall into line; that 'magic outsourcing' button has been pressed. Publishers certainly don't let developers just get on with making the game, and there is a good reason for this. They monitor the progress, they check quality and they make sure they get what they are paying for. This is exactly the same for outsourcing. Regular visits, frequent communication and milestone-based quality reviews are essential to productive outsourcing and getting what you want.

You have to invest time for it to be a success, and therein lies a problem. Outsourcing is predominately seen as a way of saving time and money, so companies may be reluctant to employ another resource to manage the process. Besides, there are not enough good producers or project managers to handle this increased workload, so it's usually left to the internal producer to handle – as if they didn't have enough to do already. Faced with development issues in their own studio, it is no wonder that any problems or concerns at the outsourcer do not get the attention they require.

Making games is a creative process and change is inevitable, so expect it, plan for it and have the respective change control systems in place to handle it. Invest time in working with the vendor, help them to improve and pass on lessons learnt. This isn't giving away the crown jewels; this is building a business partnership. Proactively manage both sides of the outsourcing process.

Catalyst's focus towards outsourcing is one not just of quick fixes, but better preventive solutions along the entire lifecycle of our outsourcing process. By overseeing the whole process, Catalyst has allowed its clients the freedom to focus on more important core game components without distractions from ancillary and support functions. Manage it, manage it, manage it – if you don't attack the risks, the risks will certainly attack you, and a little risk management saves a lot of fan cleaning.
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MOTION CAPTURE

Cheap as chips

To many, outsourcing is all about saving some money – but, explains Beriah's **Kevin Hassall**, you get what you pay for…

Outsourcing, I'm sometimes told, is all about cost. It's about spending less, about saving money by using cheaper resources.

If cheap is what you really want, the lowest cost usable art I ever sourced was at $200 per man month. Regrettably, it was just a two man team. They had no notion of copyright. They'd go quiet for days on end. They frequently misunderstood the brief and then, as soon as they had some published work in their portfolios, they cleared off and got jobs elsewhere. It was unscalable, barely controlled, inefficient, terrifying, and unsustainable – a headache that you probably wouldn't want to have.

By contrast, I once had an entire dev project delayed by an art issue, and I broke the bottleneck by bringing in externals who, in three days, solved a creative problem that had foxed a UK team for 2 months. At £95 per person per hour they were not 'cheap resources', but I'd argue that it was the best value art I ever commissioned.

'Cheap resources' have all sorts of interesting strings attached to them. There are always new depths of dubiousness to uncover: protection money paid to religious fundamentalists, money-laundering, even the option of 'buying' a free team by paying a bribe to a dictator's henchman.

On the other hand, there are some excellent, professionally run companies, with bags of talent and commitment, who can do wonderful work for you at a very good price. A lot of work coming out of Asia is absolutely at UK levels of quality. And in terms of commitment, they'll get up in the night to be on a conference call if you need them to. I once found myself herding a team out of the door to attend prayers – they'd told me that they wanted to honour their religious obligation to attend Friday worship, but as noon approached their desire to please the client had overtaken any religious sensibility.

Which brings me to one of my biggest bug-bears: 'man month rates.' These are a distraction: you don't want to pay for time, you want to pay for results. A coding project recently crossed my desk where a UK, an Eastern European and an Asian team were quoting for some tools and tech work. The most expensive option turned out to be the Asian team, despite having the lowest man month cost. They wanted three times as long to do the work as either of the other teams. It's the cost of completed deliverables that matters, not some notional man-month rate.

Good work is completed by good people, regardless of where they are in the world, not by 'resources'. What gets done in a month depends on the individuals. Two weeks ago I set up a project where an extremely accomplished team are now working 18 hour days to help the client out of a crisis – and uncredited, too. Their man-month rate and geographical location are irrelevant; what matters is the skills and commitment that they show as people.

On average I'd expect a project that uses externals well to achieve efficiency savings of about 30 per cent, though the big wins are only really to be had as you move beyond formal production-driven outsourcing, and into the more interesting methods of using external partners. A 30 per cent-plus boost can generate a lot of cash to reinvest in the project, or just to put into the bank as a cushion against future hardship.

Get it right and your team's jobs are more secure, your projects more profitable, your games higher quality, your productions less stressed. But get it wrong and you'll be in a world of unskilled recruits, devouring your attention and delivering little. The first step in getting it right is to banish any notion of cheap resources.

What's surprising is that this even needs to be said. Successful developers have known for years that internally they should only ever hire the right people, not cheap people. So why on Earth, just because the work is being done a distance away, should anyone seriously think that games are made successfully by hiring cheap resources? Instead, to get the best value, apply your proven principles to your external processes: focus on getting the right people.

www.beriah.net

Kevin Hassall has worked in production and acquisitions for 15 years. He took over co-development and outsourcing specialist Beriah in January 2009.

The Killzone Three

What happens when outsourcers work together to pool their resources? **Ed Fear** takes a look at how Killzone 2 benefited from such a trinity…

OUTSOURCING ASPECTS OF YOUR production is commonplace. What's not so common, however, is to realise how these disparate elements can work together, to bring their own relative expertise together to create even more impressive content.

UK-based outsource partners Audiomotion (mo-cap), Axis (pre-vis/intro movies) and Side (vocal direction/writing) have long had a partnership. Given that they all work in different fields, it's no surprise that they've been contracted to work on the same project at the same time.

One such project was Guerilla's *Killzone 2*. The three came together on the game's intro movie; a three-minute long 'epic journey' which follows a fleet of soldiers departing their base into the vast reaches of space, before descending on the Helghast's home planet of Helghan. Axis' Stuart Aitken took directorial control over the intro, while Audiomotion performed the actual work of capturing the performances, while Side recorded dialogue from the actors, rather than do so seperately in a sound booth.

The casting of those performances had been down to Side – and working with Audiomotion helped prepare the actors for what was to come. "With detailed insight from AudioMotion about what a mo-cap shoot involves, we were able to better prepare the actors," says Side's Andy Emery.

"It can be intimidating, even for Hollywood actors, to walk out in front of a lot of people and cameras in a lycra bodysuit. By letting the actors know what to expect, and what was expected of them, we helped set up a better environment for good performances."

But it also helped on a technical level, too: "Side's expertise in dialogue recording enabled us to build a bespoke audio rig that worked seamlessly with the mo-cap rig. We also advised on a suitable sound stage for the shoot to ensure the recorded dialogue could be used directly in the game."

Having the three work together also helped logistically - rather than Guerilla have to worry about dates, locations and other such administrative tasks, the companies were able to coordinate their schedules without needing to be micromanaged. "We carried out a lot of behind-the-scenes prep work," explains Emery. "It made sense for Side and AudioMotion to discuss potential shoot dates, and technical requirements between ourselves."

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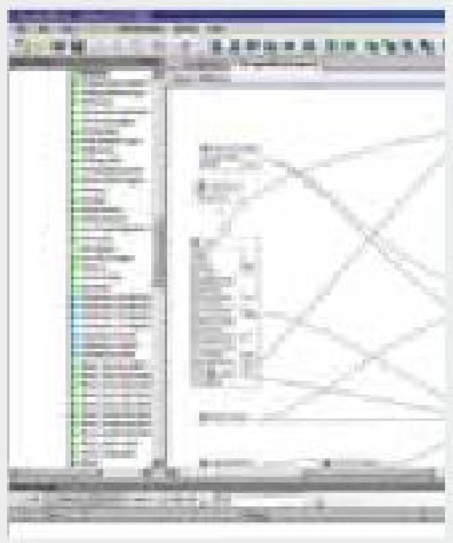

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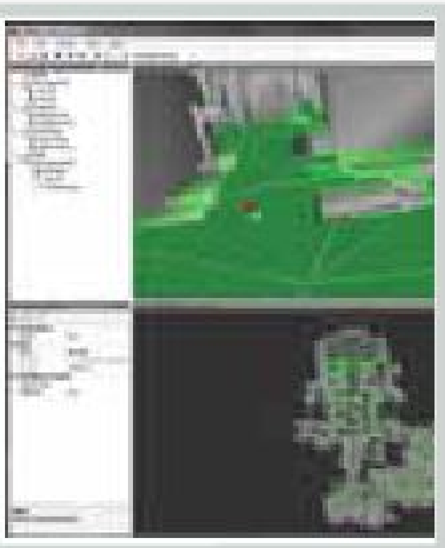

Mods and rockers

The amateur creators that rocked the Make Something Unreal contest, p49

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European invasion

There's a comment in the interview across the page, by Emergent's Geoff Selzer, that took me a little bit by surprise at the time.

That comment is 'Europe is slow.'

Now, of course, he's not talking about any sort of mental retardation here – it's a reference to the speed at which middleware is adopted in the territory. But while he might have caused me to furrow by brow quizzically at the time, he might indeed be right.

I like to think of the UK and Europe as being home to some of the world's best developers: the blockbuster envelope-pushing of Rockstar North, the beyond-cutting-edge graphics of Crytek, the innovation of Lionhead. We've definitely got a lot to be proud of, that's for sure.

I would have assumed that such forward-thinking would have carried forwards to middleware usage. But looking back at the vast number of 'Company X is using Technology Y' online stories that I used to write on a day-to-day basis, it's fair to say that the vast majority were US or Far Eastern. (Actually, the vast majority were Bioware Austin, but that's beside the point).

Of course, that's probably because there's more studios in the US, but looking at a general trend, there seems to be more European adopting experimental middleware, but far fewer picking whole engine solutions.

So, from Emergent's perspective, it probably is tougher than other territories. But with Crytek readying their assault on Epic's stronghold, and Unity sweeping up all the splinter groups formed by studio cutbacks and closures, Europe could soon become a hotbed for engine technology. And with Emergent's strong new European team, it could be well placed for the battles ahead.

Ed Fear
ed.fear@intentmedia.co.uk

Networking at

Scott Johnson, president

A new EMEA developer relations manager, and a new online component – it's not just Emergent's customers that are iterating quickly. **Ed Fear** sat down with CEO Geoffrey Selzer and president Scott Johnson to how Lightspeed is changing the company …

How has the past year been for Emergent worldwide?

Geoffrey Selzer: Our first two quarters were very, very solid. Asia is extraordinary for us – it just continues to expand. Europe is slow, though, but I think everything in Europe is slow. I've never heard anything other than, 'Europe is slow.'

Scott Johnson: We see it as an opportunity to invest. We've just hired [ex-Chemistry studio head] Mike Cox, and we're really excited to have him on board. He's taken a hard look at Lightspeed and has taken a good look at the toolset. When he looked at the games he's made in the past, and what we're able to do Lightspeed, he couldn't not join us. That was a nice piece of objective feedback from the market.

We think there's a lot of talent in Europe that just needs a little kickstart, and that's why we're all here at Gamescom, to get the word out.

The newest update to Lightspeed is a new networking solution – why was that a focus for you?

GS: It's not at an extra cost, it's just an update to Lightspeed. The underlying architecture of Lightspeed encapsulates a lot of our server technology from the beginning, like the Entity Modelling Framework for example. So, we're now releasing the first version of the server libraries and networking code, so you can do online multiplayer internally. It's all that data-driven nature, so you can do updates to your Lua scripts or worlds, without having to recompile and redistribute – it just pushes it out to all clients. We're really excited about that.

The nice thing is that people can start prototyping their online component from day one. Be it a boxed game with peer-to-peer, or you're building an MMO, you can start laying out that gameplay from the first day. It's a unique take to online that captures those core values of rapid prototyping, rapid iteration and rapid game balancing.

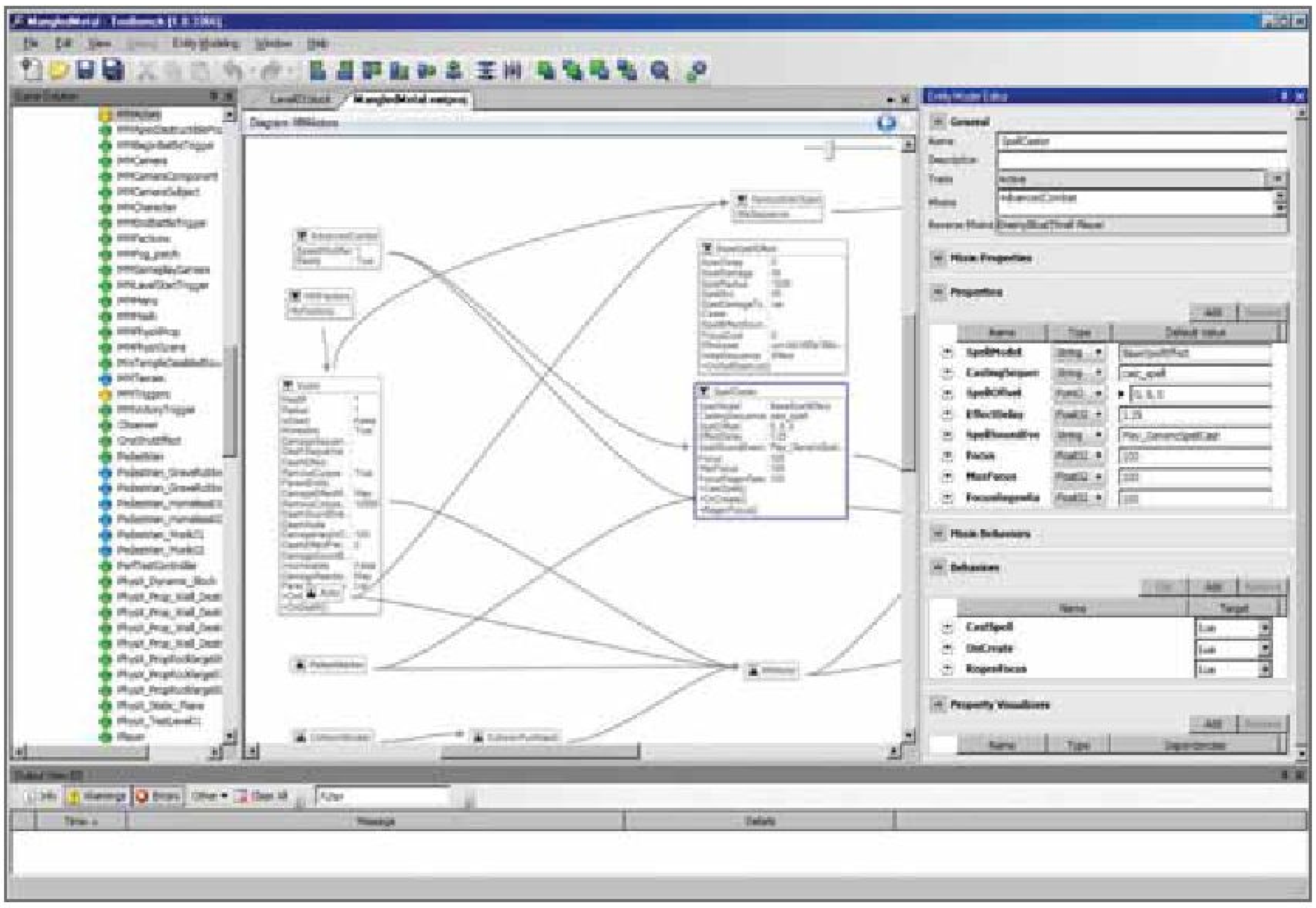
SJ: Where the rubber hits the road is from the designer's perspective. The designer can start playing with game concepts in an online multiplayer prototyping environment, as opposed to trying to bolt that on and make assumptions. We think it's pretty unique in that way, as the other game engines out there don't really facilitate that right out of the box.

> ***"We see Europe as an opportunity to invest. We think there's a lot of talent in Europe that just needs a little kickstart."***
>
> Scott Johnson, Emergent

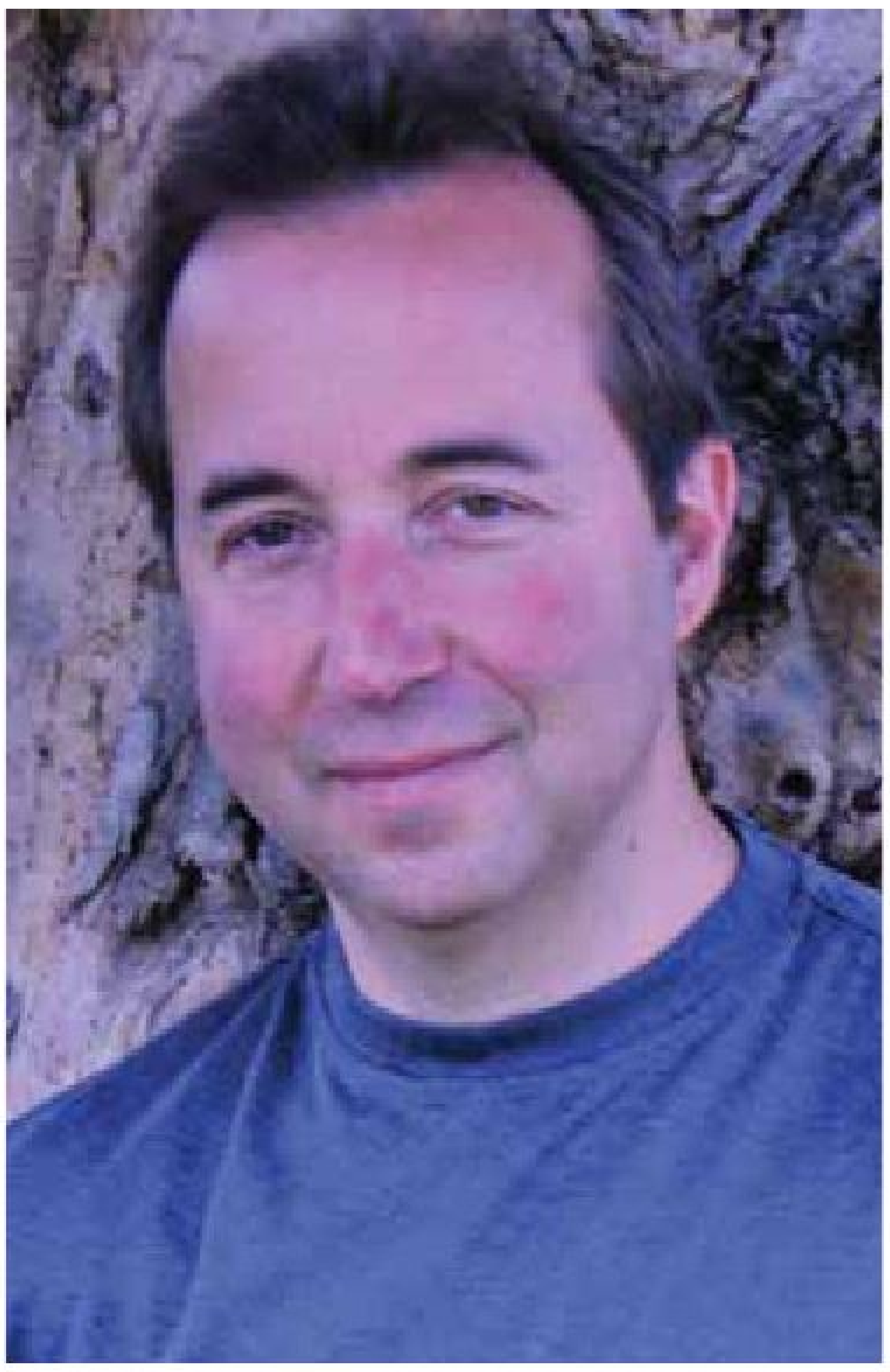
But don't a lot of people already tack on external networking engines?

GS: Sure. Quazal are really well-known and respected. They're fabulous; we really like those guys on every level. But it's an external tack-on to the development environment, while this is

Lightspeed



Left: Lightspeed's Entity Modelling Framework is the backbone of the rapid prototyping system, and the new networking system directly ties into this too.



Geoffrey Selzer, CEO

fully integrated. Lightspeed was designed from the ground up with distributed systems and networking built-in, but it was a matter of creating the proper APIs and interfaces, and fully integrating those capabilities.

So it's really like bringing out the power of Lightspeed, so it's not an add-on in that sense. It keeps the core values. We're pretty proud of it.

Does the similarity to the existing Lightspeed architecture make it easier for engineers to get up to speed?

GS: The truth of the matter is that they don't have to get up to speed. They start building a game and it replicates across multiple machines. You decide which data is correlating between the machines. Depending on the types of gameplay and the type of latency you can deal with, all of that is already pre-integrated in. You do not have to bring networking sophistication or knowledge deeply into your game team in order to fully exploit this.

SJ: It's got the same modularity that Gamebryo and Lightspeed have. From that perspective, it's consistent to what's already there. The whole point is that you don't need an army of networking guys to do a multiplayer game now.

There's already a number of engines out there designed specifically for MMOs – can Gamebryo compete with them, given that it's more general-purpose?

GS: Here's what we've noticed: there are a couple of real MMO solutions out there, but largely, when people get a hold of them, they refactor them and rebuild them in quite a number of ways. There are two big issues when building an MMO: the first is that rapid iteration is critical for an MMO, maybe more so than for any other genre. So that tying of rapid iteration to networked games is probably the hardest problem to solve as you're building an MMO.

The second step is all the services, how you host it, all of that. The question on how far we drive that will be market-driven. If you go to China, if you go to Korea, what everybody has is the services, but a large selection of them buy our client. So now you're able to buy a full development environment for an MMO and then tie that in to the services on the back end. We think this is going to expand our already considerable presence in the MMO market.

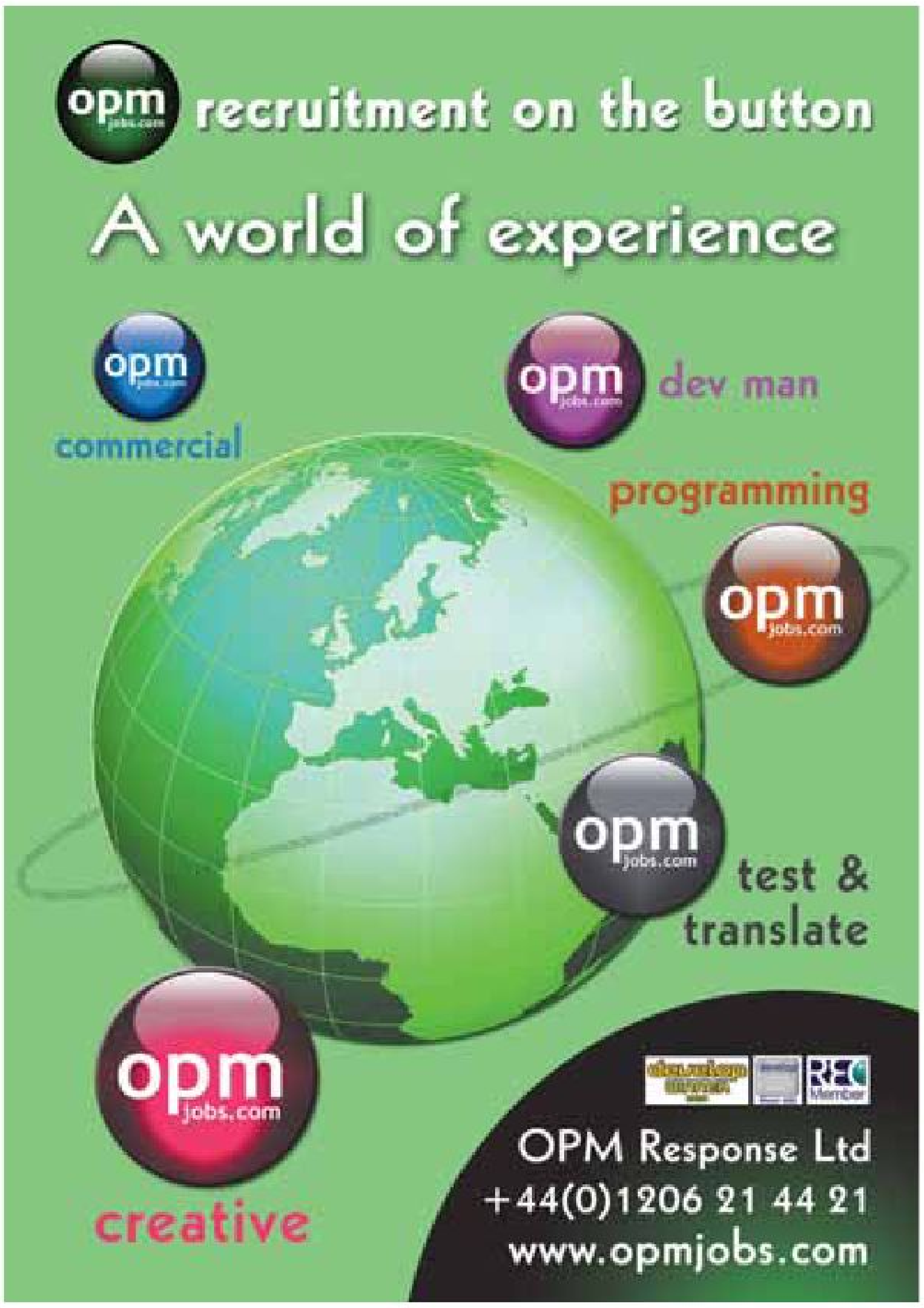
> ***"For those looking to develop a multi-platform MMO, there's not a better environment to build that with than Gamebryo."***
>
> *Geoffrey Selzer, Emergent*

SJ: What we see is that a lot of our Asian customers have put a lot of money into the security side of networking – they've got their armies of bots crawling all over to make sure everything's going okay. They throw a lot of resources at that. What they haven't done, and where the opportunity for us has been, is on the client side. Now, with Lightspeed having this common data-driven framework tied into the server, and able to push new content through and update in real-time, sitting on top of their security – that's where this gets exciting, in terms of being able to push out new quests and new content in an agile way. That's where we're seeing a lot of activity now.

But we're in MMOs in North America too, predominantly with EA Mythic. They're very excited about where we're heading, on a lot of levels. So at the end of the day, the architecture of Lightspeed, the time it saves in being able to build new content and push it into the world, expanding the value of the game, can be greatly reduced due to the nature of the architecture. What this means to the operator is that you can continually feed your customers new content and quests in a way that's pretty cumbersome to do these days. I think of some of the workflow that we've seen in order to push out updates, and it's pretty bad!

GS: The other important area is those looking to develop a multi-platform MMO – people have been talking about that for a while. There's not a better environment in the world to build that with than Gamebryo, period. Nobody can touch this, it's pretty cool. So on the one level this new networking layer seems like a small layer, but we think it's pretty profound.

www.emergent.net



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GUIDE: MMO ENGINES

Want your game to sound its best? **Ed Fear** rounds up the biggest and the best audio engines on the market…

More and more companies are getting into the massively-multiplayer space as time goes on – be they established role-playing companies such as EA Bioware and Bethesda/ZeniMax Online, or companies subverting the genre to move it away from orcs and swords like Realtime Worlds and CCP. And yet many are put off by the scale of effort required: matching Realtime Worlds' $50 million dollars of investment, or Blizzard's huge global infrastructure, is not an easy (or cheap) task.

As such, there's more scope now than ever for companies to offer middleware aimed at taking some of the strain away and letting developers focus on what they do best – content. But what's interesting to see is the rapid metamorphosis of non-specialist engines, such as Unreal Engine 3 and CryENGINE, as they seek to be more MMO-friendly. People have been bolting on their own online solutions to engines like these for a while – both Realtime Worlds and EA Mythic used the two more general engines below before they got serious about supporting MMOs out of the box. In fact, while we might have struggled to pick four products to round-up in the past, now there's so many applicable that we'll be focusing on four more next month, those especially focused on the in-browser MMO space.

HEROENGINE

DEVELOPER
Simutronics
CLIENTS
Bioware, Zenimax Online, Stray Bullet, Colony
PLATFORMS
PC
PRICE
Available on request
CONTACT
Via website

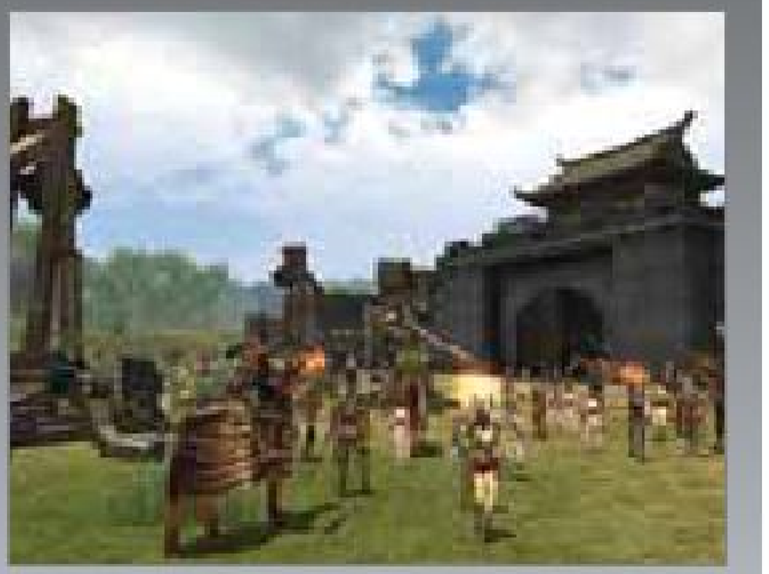
HeroEngine's real-time server-based collaborative editor has won it much support from studios

www.heroengine.com

HeroEngine still continues to go from strength to strength – and given that it's powering eagerly anticipated *Star Wars* MMO *The Old Republic*, it's arguably the current favourite. Recent updates include the much-revered Live Update and World Push technologies that allow developers to push any assets – be they art, scripts, data files or area data – without having to take the world offline. It also features HeroPath, an integrated pathfinding system, plus support for seamless worlds.

BIGWORLD

DEVELOPER
BigWorld Technologies
CLIENTS
Game Arts, Wargaming.net, 9COM, Astrum Online Entertainment, Hangzhou 9D
PLATFORMS
PC, Xbox 360 (in development)
PRICE
Available on request
CONTACT
Via website



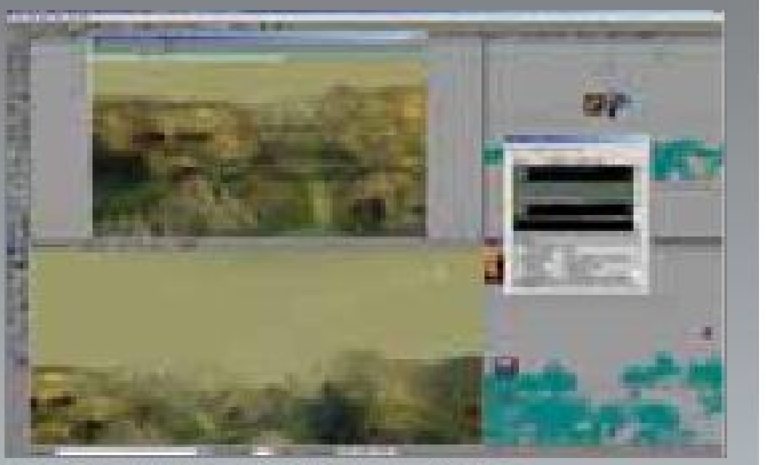
BigWorld powers many of Asia's biggest MMOs

www.bigworldtech.com

If there's one purpose-built MMO engine that's captured the heart of the Far East – easily the hotbed of MMO development and monetisation, no matter how well *World of Warcraft* is doing – it's BigWorld. Version 2.0 of the tech, due for release soon, is a massive overhaul, featuring an overhaul of the renderer, native x64 support, multicore optimisations, support for in-game instant messaging, a fully-featured integrated web browser and even a weather editor.

UNREAL ENGINE 3

DEVELOPER
Epic
CLIENTS
Sony Online Entertainment, Realtime Worlds, NCsoft
PLATFORMS
PC, PS3, Xbox 360
PRICE
Available on request
CONTACT
mrein@epicgames.com



UE3 is powering DC Universe Online

www.unrealtechnology.com

It's the behemoth that's cornered most of the triple-A cross-platform market, but now Epic has set its sights on the MMO space. A number of studios have been using the tech for their online titles for some years now – it's powering Realtime Worlds' *APB* and SOE's *DC Universe Online* – but now the company's Chinese studio has developed Atlas, which adds a whole suite of new functionality integrated within the UE3 editor and back-end engineering to cope with an MMO's demands.

GAMEBRYO LIGHTSPEED

DEVELOPER
Emergent Game Technologies
CLIENTS
EA Mythic
PLATFORMS
PC, Xbox 360, PS3, Wii
PRICE
Available on request
CONTACT
Via website

So new that it has no announced customers, EA Mythic is said to be 'pleased' with the upgrade

www.emergent.net

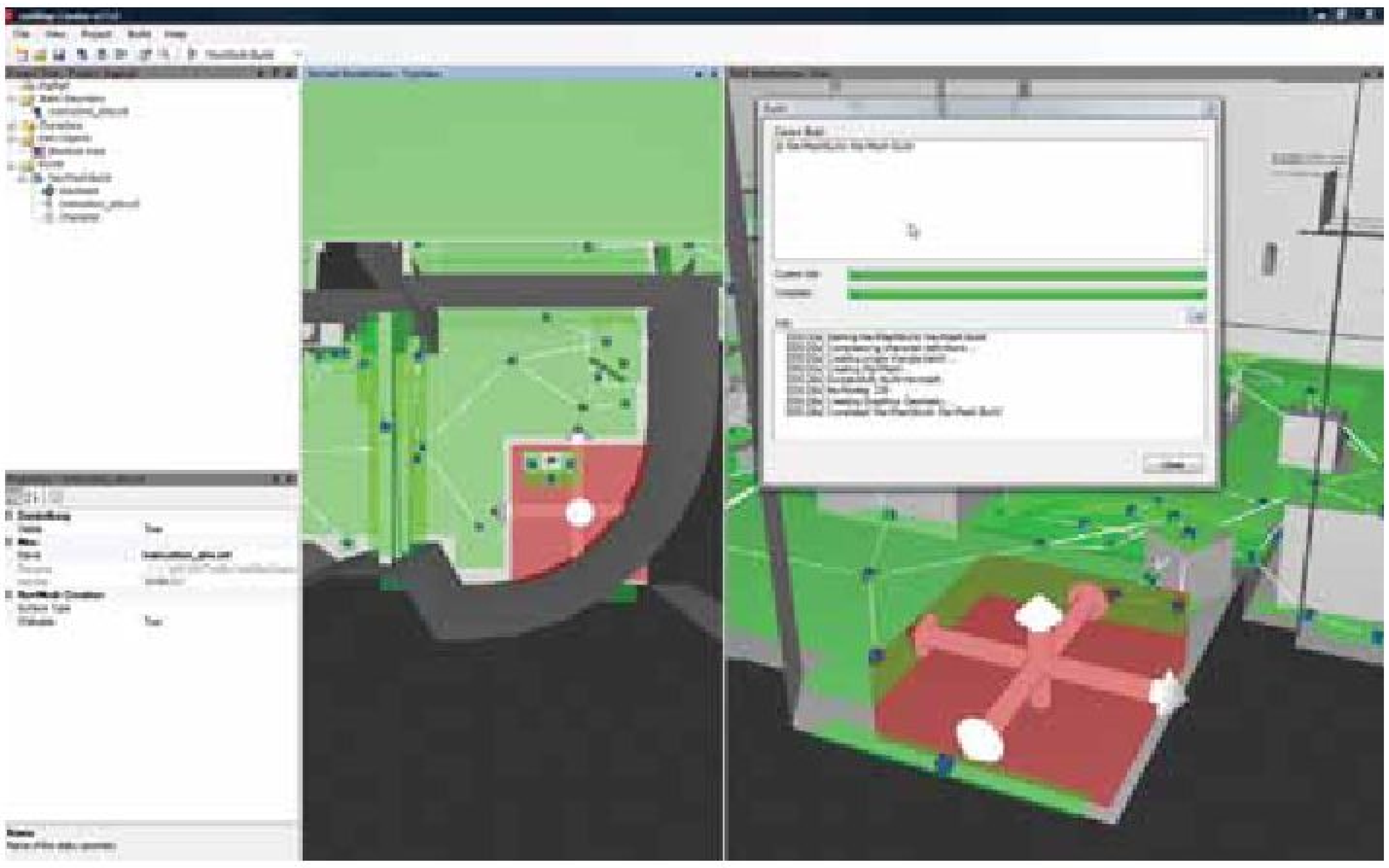
Emergent's Gamebryo Lightspeed, which is geared for rapid iteration, has just been updated to include a networking component – one that shares the grander focus of getting teams fine-tuning the details faster than ever before. It takes the engine's Entity Framework System online, which allows one-click real-time modifications across all connected clients without having to restart. All the details of online communication are handled implicitly by the engine, leaving you to iterate, iterate, iterate.

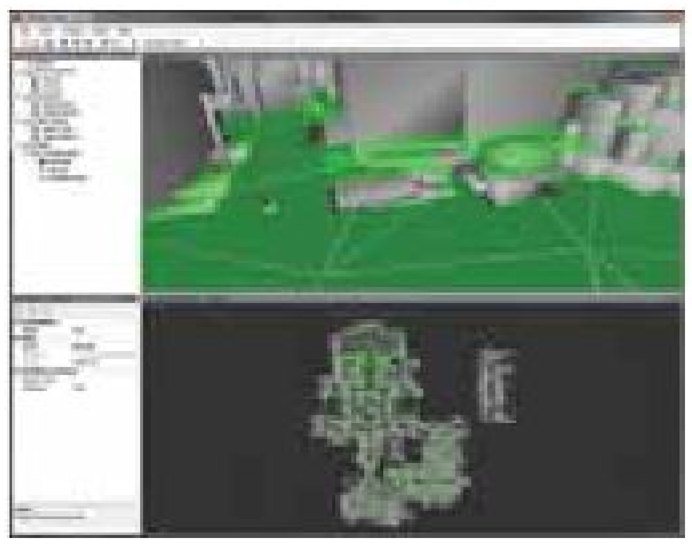
KEYRELEASE

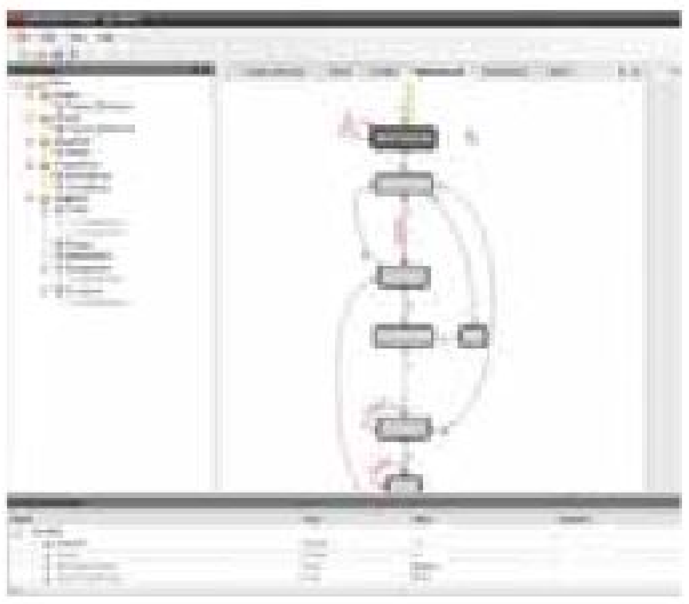
xaitFramework 2.5

Can AI middleware really branch into high-level behaviours and learning? **Ed Fear** takes a look at Xaitment's wide-ranging modular AI solution…

DEVELOPER: Xaitment
PRICE: On request
www.xaitment.com







German company Xaitment has always had a hard task ahead of it: not only convincing people that they need AI middleware – a tricky enough market to crack at the best of times – but that there's also scope for high-level artificial intelligence tools beyond just pathfinding and dynamic obstacle avoidance.

Co-founded in 2004 by Dr. Andreas Gerber – a long time research scientist at the prestigious German Research Institute for Artificial Intelligence in Saarbrucken – the company has always been excited in the dynamic opportunities for AI to orchestrate new experiences.

"When we started, we came from a University background and we were full of all of these great ideas," Gerber tells *Develop*.

"We saw games like *FEAR*, and the planning and dynamic and adaptive AI that was in them and thought, hey, everyone needs this. In truth, a lot of people said that, although it was nice, they really didn't need it."

RE-THINKING

So the team went back to the drawing board, and looked at what it had to do to make its modular suite of artificial intelligence tools – together referred to as xaitFramework – more appealing to studios.

It's this introspection that has fuelled the development of the 2.5 versions, most of which will be out by the time you read this. As such, most of the effort has been placed on creating intuitive tools to decouple AI design from programmers and give it back to the designers.

"We came to the point where we realised we needed to provide developers with tools that would really help the internal workflow – especially to decouple the creative part from the development part. Often we see that the game designer and game programmer are completely separate people. One is quite structured, the other is quite creative. The designer comes up with the design, the programmer implements it, and then the designer says 'actually, no, that's not what I intended.' And then you're stuck in a loop," says Gerber.

"Obviously, game development is all about iteration, but if the designer has to get the programmer to make changes then it really slows down the system. Our idea is that the game programmer can integrate once and then the game designer can make changes on his or her own. We've been talking to customers and we're starting to hear them use the term 'AI designer', which is exactly what we're evangelising."

MIND SHARE

Of course, a further uphill battle is convincing people they need AI middleware at all – and in this sense, the firm's pathfinding and movement modules, xaitMap and xaitMove, act as something like a gateway drug. Which might sound a strange way of describing it, but more and more companies need convincing that they need any AI middleware at all, let alone high level stuff.

"Sometimes we hear people say, 'We're doing an MMO, we don't need any AI.' But if you want the player to be able to click on a location and move there, well, that's AI – it's just very low-level stuff," Gerber explains.

"Most people generate navmeshes by hand. They have lots of lines and points, but this is technology from the last century; it's really outdated. Our solution is automatic, and it's 20 times faster than some other tools."

> ***"We came to the point where we realised we had to provide developers with tools that would help internal workflow."***

Another module of the xaitFramework is xaitControl, a hierarchical, probabilistic finite state machine system. But, we ask Gerber, aren't games already using FSMs extensively?

"Yeah," he replies, "you can quite easily implement a simple finite state machine with some if/else statements. Everyone has these in games, and sometimes they'll have visual editors for them too. But I've never seen any team – even the really big ones – develop a tool internally that's generic enough to apply to the next game, and the next game after that."

And so xaitControl fills that gap. But it's not just AI behaviours that the tool is suited to. "You can of course use state machines for determining which animations should play, or even to completely control your GUI. That's why it's called xaitControl – it's control of not only the bot's behaviour, but also of the whole game flow should you so wish."

xaitControl is, essentially, a bridging between the traditional AI middleware space of pathfinding – which xaitment covers with xaitMap and xaitMove – and what it really wants to bring to the world: agents that are aware of their surroundings, that can think, infer and learn from experience.

"The new things, like xaitThink and xaitKnow, are rule based systems where you can infer new knowledge about what you've seen before, or you can think about certain situations and come up with new goals. That makes the game much more dymanic but also logical, which makes it more understandable for the player.

"Think about *Oblivion*, for example: people would get annoyed by that because they would go into a house, steal something, and then get arrested when they leave. In these situations, the AI should only act on what it perceives from the environment. If the player was noisy in the house, and then gets arrested, they can say 'Okay, I see what I did wrong.' It's a direct reaction, and it makes the world much more coherent and alive."

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HEARDABOUT

Ben Minto Unplugged

In the first of an occasional series featuring unsung heroes of game audio, **John Broomhall** speaks to one of DICE's audio directors, Ben Minto…

With a maths and physics background in computational fluid dynamics, Ben Minto should, by rights, be working for British Aerospace. However, thanks to his university pastime – fixing and re-selling car-boot analogue synth bargains – he eventually found himself transported from *Future Music's* classifieds to London's TSC working as a Pro Tools tech, where customer and game audio manager Stephen Root was sufficiently intrigued by Minto's interest in 'making noises' to offer him a job at Acclaim.

With Chris Sweetman also joining the department, the production nucleus that formed has gone down in the annals of game audio history. A dream-team later reformed at Criterion where, just as racing games became a yearly iteration for the studio, along came an FPS called *Black*, and with it a chance to create award-winning audio.

"It was definitely a highlight," says Minto. "Four different sound designers, each with their own unique style, and four dedicated audio programmers. It was a case of the right people, at the right time, on the right project. Together we squeezed some amazing performance and fidelity out of the PS2."

For Minto, career highlights are as much about people as products. "I'm amazed by the level of skills people have – every sound person I meet has a unique skill set and feel for how it should sound. It's very rare to come across truly original ideas. Usually the 'new' idea is an amalgamation of two or more great ideas. That's where the majority, and the spark, for most of my thinking comes from."

One of Minto's key areas of expertise is field recording. "You actually feel the sound in situ, and can appreciate how loud it is," he enthuses. "Sit next to a Howitzer letting rip, or in a Pagini Zonda at 180mph, and the sensation of sound is unbelievable. You have to ascertain how to communicate that sensation.

"Trial and error's really important, you learn by making mistakes. I once tried to do the *Terminator 2* liquid metal effect using canned dog food. Criterion had just built a new live room where I'd set up eight expensive microphones. I bought the biggest tin of cheap dog food, opened both ends of the can to record the slipping wetness, but the contents wouldn't move. So I'm there, holding my breath, shaking this tin and suddenly it all slides out – without a whisper of sound, hitting the ground and spraying chunks of meat all over the mics. The studio stank for three weeks and all I got was a 'thunk'!"

This spirit also pervades Minto's project approach. "At the outset, disregard the potential constraints or you'll hobble your creativity. I capture game footage, and tracklay it like a movie, without considering limitations. Ignore that you're making a game and just work out what sound experience you want to portray, then later figure out how to do it in game. In *Battlefield 1943*, I used real recorded plane-passes, because the game screamed out for those amazing throbbing bys. We had to decipher some code tweaks to do with timing, but it's so much better than a loop model with game Doppler imposed – it's alive!"

> ***"Experimentation is needed with some playing. You've got to push yourself and do something new."***
>
> Ben Minto, DICE

Minto is enthusiastic about audio's potential for driving emotional responses, through sound choice and run-time mixing, believing that modeling the real world is not necessarily what's required dramatically.

"I remember when we had the technology and the RAM to play too many sounds. When ducking and culling didn't cut it, we needed a dynamic mixer to deal with our defined snapshot states. This evoked questions: sure, you can turn crash sounds up and change the pitch, but what emotion do you want to create? Do you want the crashes to feel rewarding, or convey fear? Are you in the real world, or isolated in your own space?

"In the real world, you hear somebody's brakes lock up and it's almost like there's a perfect silence as you wait for the next sound. You're expecting the worst. You experience complete clarity and focus as your brain cuts out the background noise.

"War veterans came out of the movie *Saving Private Ryan* saying they remembered that's how storming the Normandy beaches had sounded – but it wasn't. Gary Rydstrom's team emotionally mixed those scenes. There were planes overhead and boats zooming past, but the most important sounds were the bullets that were probably going to kill you and your friend. That's what was heard in the mix, and what the veterans recall."

With years of audio success ahead, does Minto see himself continuing to work in games?

"Yes, definitely. We don't have limits anymore. The public are more critical and mediocrity won't do. If you've got the budget and time, you can do anything.

"I still get my biggest buzz from true sound effect creation – not the everyday impacts or footsteps, but when you need to make something and you can't. I like it when it goes wrong, because it means you've got to learn something. Experimentation is needed along with some playing about. You've got to push yourself and do something new."

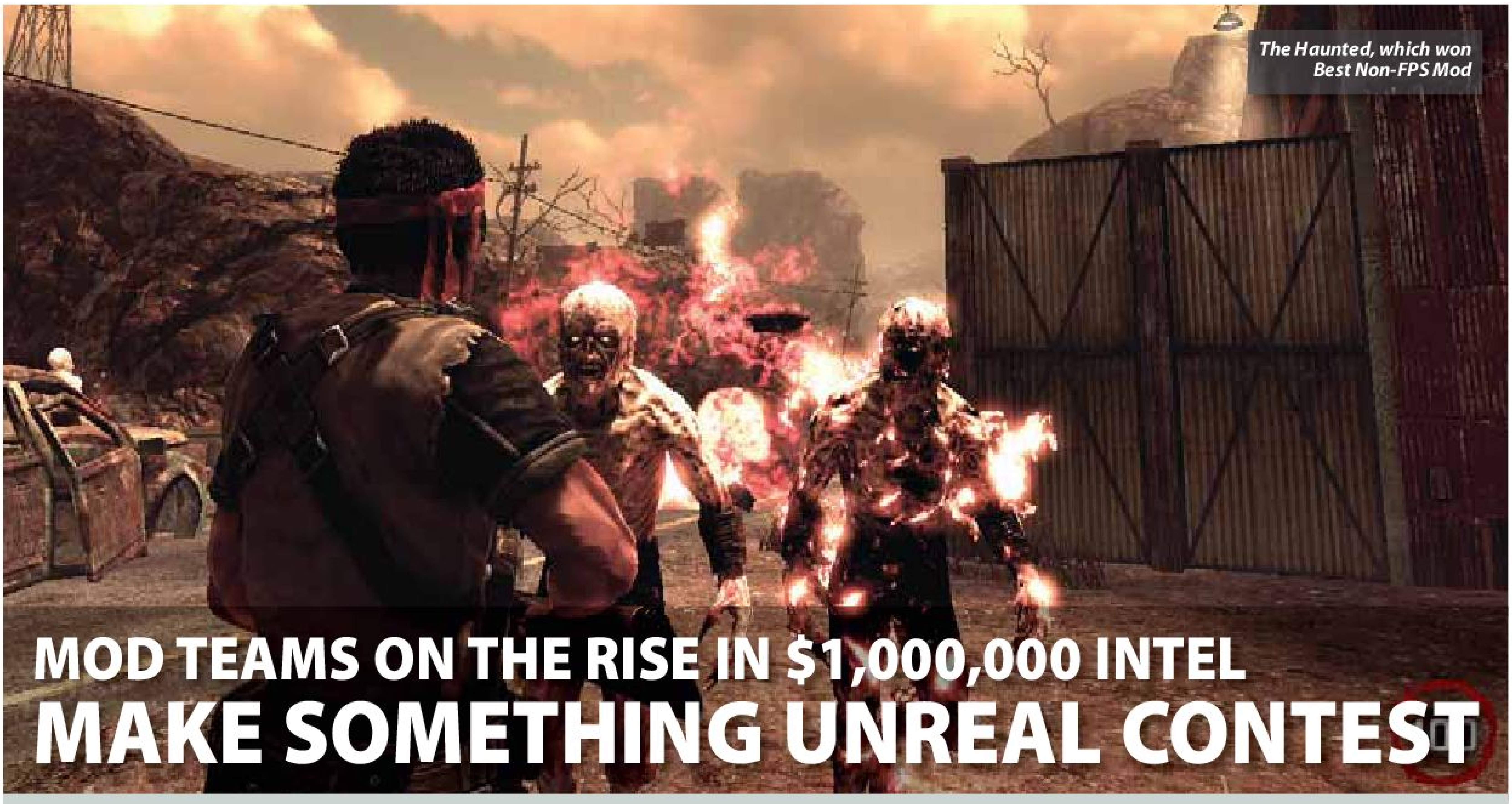
Above: DICE's Audio Director, Ben Minto

SOFTOGRAPHY

(AS AUDIO DIRECTOR)
Battlefield Heroes
Battlefield 1943

(AS SOUND DESIGNER)
Mirror's Edge
BLACK
Burnout Revenge
Burnout 3 Takedown
Burnout 2 Point of Impact
Burnout
Airblade
Furfighters

John Broomhall is an independent audio director, consultant and content provider
develop@johnbroomhall.co.uk
www.johnbroomhall.co.uk



The Haunted, which won Best Non-FPS Mod

MOD TEAMS ON THE RISE IN $1,000,000 INTEL MAKE SOMETHING UNREAL CONTEST

Epic Games and Intel announced Phase Three winners of the $1 Million Intel 'Make Something Unreal Contest' at SIGGRAPH 2009.

What is clearer now than ever before, is that all kinds of unique and high-quality game content can be created with the Unreal Engine Three toolset – without even touching the engine's source code.

Thanks to the Unreal development community, hundreds of free mods for *Unreal Tournament Three* are available for PC, and many have made their way to PlayStation 3 as well.

The Haunted is a third-person survival horror total conversion that took home top honors for Best Non-FPS Mod, Best New Weapon Set, and Best Graphics in Map, plus first and fifth places in Best Level for a Game Mod.

While anyone can play *The Haunted* in single-player mode, its multiplayer experience shines with four-player co-op, demons versus humans Battle mode, and Demonizer mode.

Another breakout mod is *The Ball*, an episodic action puzzle game that won first place for Best FPS Mod, second place for Best Level for a Game Mod, third place for Best Graphics in Map, and fifth place for Best Use of Physics.

The Ball is also a UT3 total conversion, meaning it uses entirely original game assets, and like *The Haunted* it has won recognition in previous phases of the contest.

Angels Fall First: Planetstorm, an assault-style game featuring massive ground and space battles, took home third place in the Best FPS category, fourth place for Best New Weapon Set, and fifth place for Best Graphics in Map. *Angels Fall First: Planetstorm* is scheduled for completion in October 2009.

Prometheus, which won second place in the Best FPS category, is a community favourite thanks to its clever time travel mechanism, in which players collaborate with ghosts of their pasts to solve time-based puzzles.

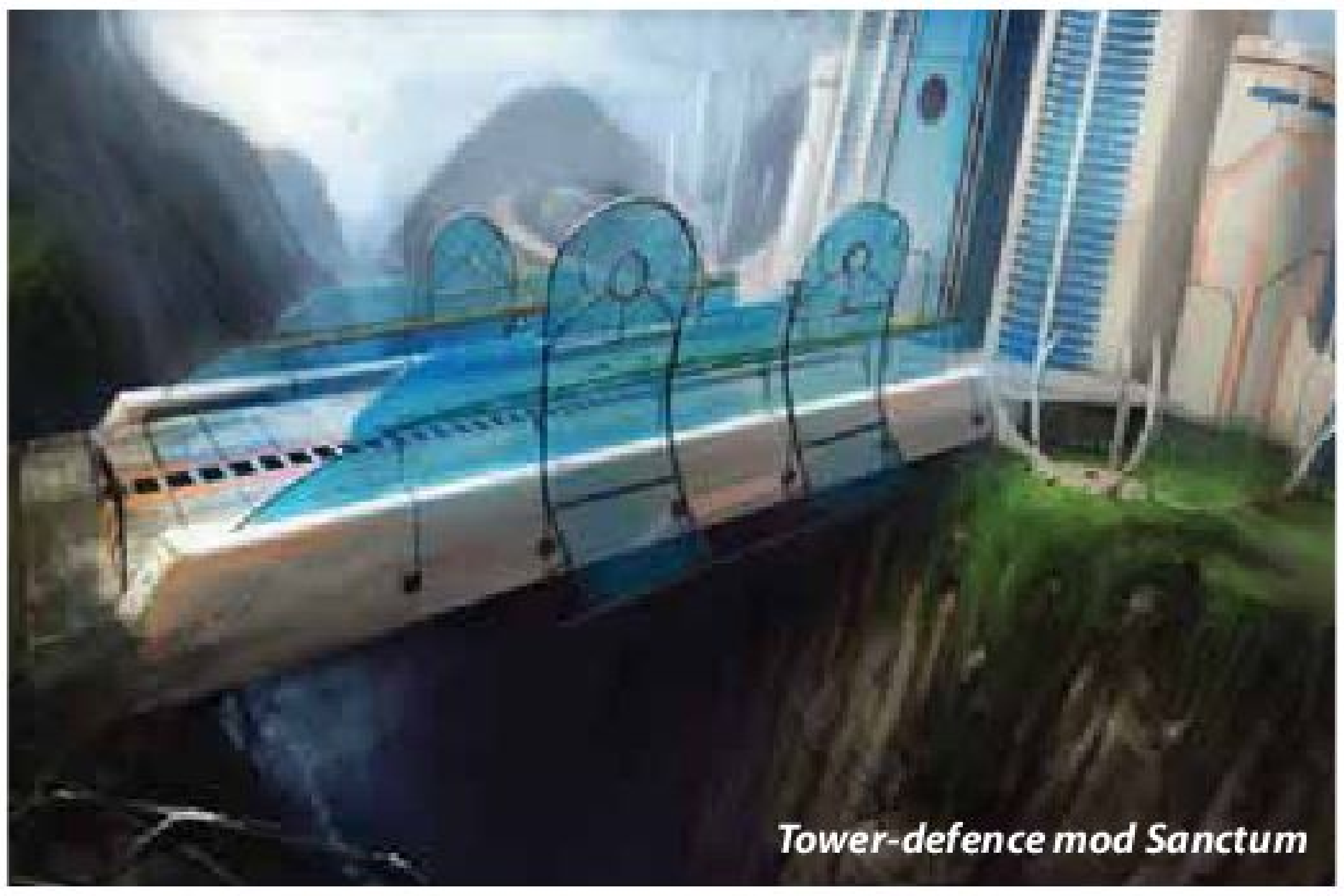
Sanctum, a total conversion that won fourth place for Best FPS Mod, is a first-person tower defence game with a unique art style. The student developers of *Sanctum* plan to add co-op multiplayer, different game types and additional turret, enemy and weapon types.

UT2D Killing Time, an updated version of the popular *UT2D* side-scrolling mod for PC and PS3, won second place in the Best Non-FPS category.

CREATIVE RECOGNITION

There are many other mods, including characters, weapons, levels and more, that have been recognised at www.makesomethingunreal.com.

Thanks to everyone in the Unreal community who has supported the contest with advice, critiques, content, code and creative genius. We are extremely grateful to have so many talented developers working with Unreal Engine technology.



Tower-defence mod Sanctum

UPCOMING EPIC ATTENDED EVENTS:

CEDEC
Tokyo, Japan
September 1-3, 2009

Austin GDC
Austin, TX
September 15-18, 2009

Tokyo Game Show
Tokyo, Japan
September 24-27, 2009

KGC
Seoul, Korea
October 7-9, 2009

Please email: mrein@epicgames.com for appointments.

To discuss anything raised in this column or general licensing opportunities for Epic Games' *Unreal* engine, contact: **mrein@epicgames.com**

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Mark Rein is vice president of Epic Games based in Raleigh, North Carolina. Since 1992 Mark has worked on Epic's licensing and publishing deals, business development, public relations, academic relations, marketing and business operations.
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Later this year we're taking the Develop Conference north - with the launch of **Develop in Liverpool** on 5 November 2009 at the Arena and Conference Centre, Liverpool.

Develop in Liverpool will reflect the thriving game community based in the North and Scotland. There will be three tracks - Evolve, Coding & Production and Art & Design, plus a networking lunch and a complimentary post event drinks reception.

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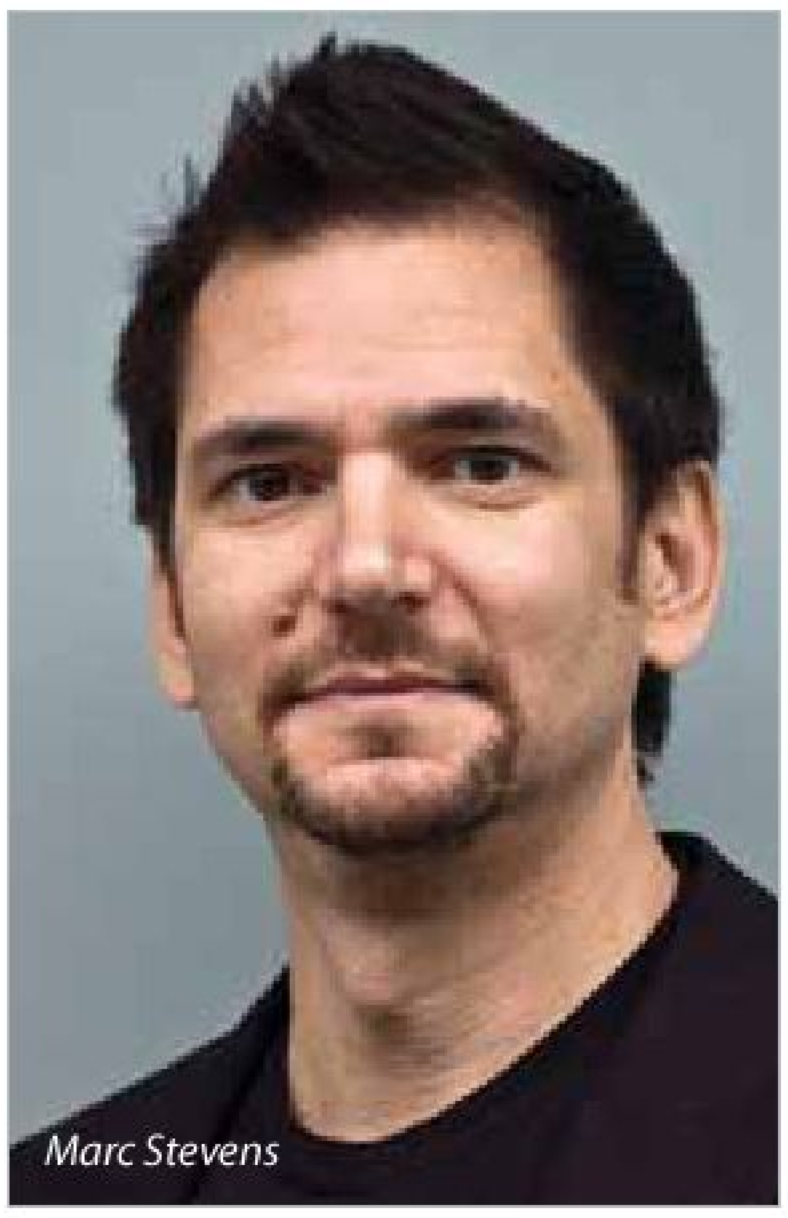

Marc Stevens

Hello and welcome to Autodesk Games Insight, our monthly column on Autodesk in the games industry. In this issue, I'd like to introduce the new Autodesk Games group and highlight our middleware solutions Autodesk Kynapse and Autodesk HumanIK.

AUTODESK GAMES – FOCUSED ON GAMES

Autodesk helps to serve the needs of customers worldwide and recently realigned the company with dedicated teams for each industry. With this, the new Autodesk Games group was born. Autodesk Games is a team focused entirely on serving the needs of the games industry through cutting edge middleware technology and powerful game art tools.

Developers trust Autodesk for its 3D packages: Autodesk Maya, Autodesk 3ds Max and Autodesk Softimage software. We expanded on our games offering with middleware, bringing reliable technology to programming teams. Autodesk Kynapse, a leading artificial intelligence middleware solution, became part of the Autodesk family with the acquisition of Kynogon.

At the last GDC, we released a new version of Autodesk HumanIK, which is a middleware solution for creating more believable run-time character animations.

CHARACTER-CENTRIC MIDDLEWARE

Game teams are pushing the boundaries by putting compelling characters in open worlds to tell stories and create new experiences. However, art production requirements such as modeling, sculpting, texturing, shading and animation have increased, but this is only one part of the problem.

Game teams need run-time technology that is able to bring characters to life in the game through realistic animation performances and decision making capabilities.

CLIENT TESTIMONIAL

> ***"The huge world of Warhammer meant we needed a very robust pathfinding solution. Autodesk Kynapse gave us an algorithmic exploration solution that enabled our AI driven actors to play with the same constraints and freedom as players."***
>
> *Matt Shaw, Chief Technology Officer*
> *Mythic Entertainment, an EA Studio*

Autodesk wants to bridge the gap between art and science, and make it much easier for people to create amazing, interactive character performances without technology getting in the way.

Our vision is for a unified workflow, where your art tools work harmoniously with run-time technology, so that getting to the game is not only quick and painless, but a creatively rewarding process.

KYNAPSE – PUT THE BRAIN IN YOUR GAME

Autodesk Kynapse is an artificial intelligence (AI) middleware solution used in over 80 high-end gaming titles. Kynapse handles dynamic 3D pathfinding, 3D spatial awareness and team coordination. What differentiates Kynapse from other AI middleware is that it helps give characters a highly cognitive understanding of surrounding environments and the ability to interact with it in a dynamic way.

HUMANIK – REALISTIC CHARACTER ANIMATION PERFORMANCES

While Kynapse helps give in-game characters artificial intelligence, Autodesk HumanIK helps characters move in a realistic way and interact with the environment. Realistic animation performances that would have been extremely difficult through traditional keyframe animation, baking and blending techniques are now easier to achieve with HumanIK. With procedural motion adaptation technology, characters adapt their motion at run-time responding to the user or the environment.

As well as enhancing your team's animation in real-time, HumanIK also helps solve the problem of animation data complexity. Production teams can focus on key performances with HumanIK working procedurally in run-time, reducing the number of animations necessary for believable results. Animators can now focus on their characters rather than mundane technical work, building compelling stories for the game.

CONCLUSION

We are excited about the new Autodesk Games group, supporting developers with 3D software and robust middleware that you can trust. If you have any questions or would like to arrange for an evaluation of our middleware technology, we'd love to hear from you. Please contact us at middleware@autodesk.com or visit www.autodesk.com/games.

Marc Stevens
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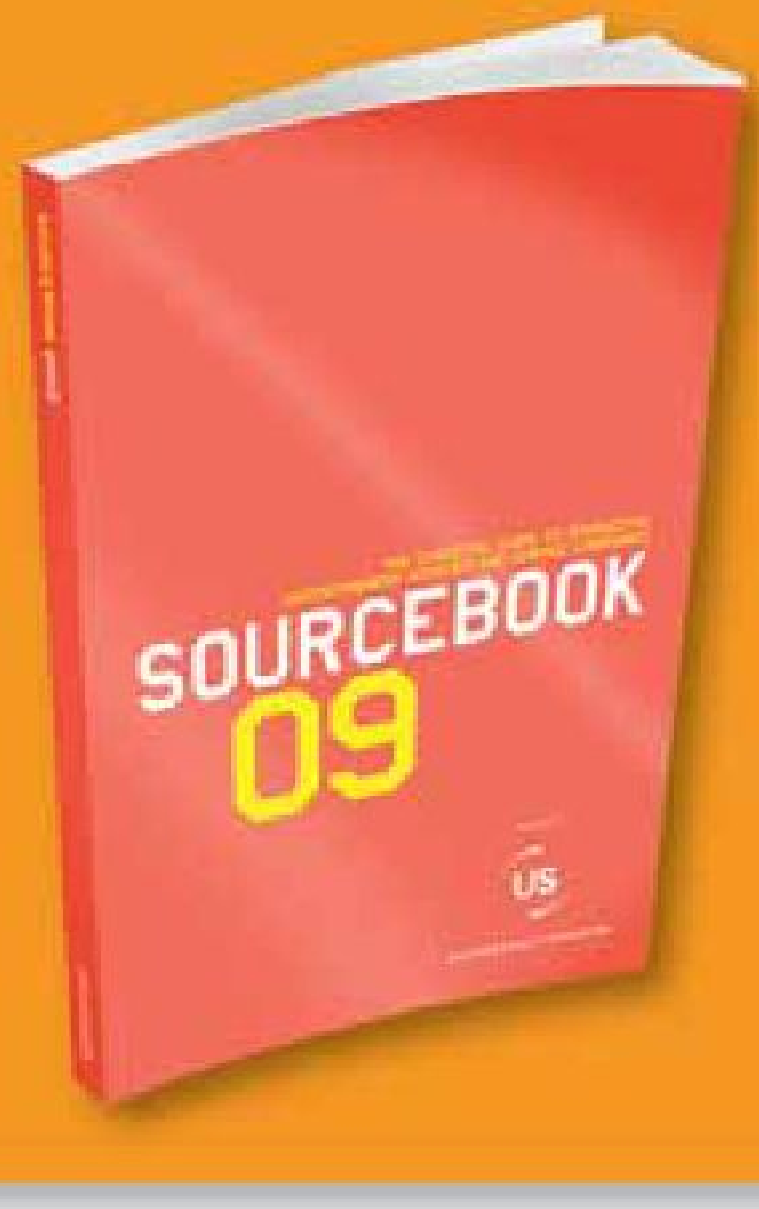

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"With any emerging market it's extremely valuable to meet other companies in the space to exchange ideas, network and simply see what the competition is doing - the Casual Games Forum provided the ideal venue to do just that."
John Chasey, President, FinBlade

"The Casual Games Forum brings together a wide variety of top level attendees from all areas of the casual games market. If you're already in casual or are about to take the leap, the CGF is an unrivalled opportunity to learn, dialogue and network with the key decision makers from across the globe."
Paul Farley, Managing Director, Tag Games

Why should you be there?

- Gather essential information about market trends and future forecasts
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Studio News

This month: Emergent, Mind Control and PopCap...

Gamebryo developer **Emergent Game Technologies** continues to expand: it has signed Mike Cox as director of developer relations for Europe, Middle East and Africa.

Cox was most recently employed as head of Kuju's Chemistry studio.

He has almost two decades of experience having worked on the production of over 50 titles on numerous platforms, including titles for EA.

Emergent says that in his new role Cox will 'lead and manage the EMEA sales team, work to expand Emergent's reach in Europe and the UK, increase its business pipeline and shape the company's overall global account management strategies, including in-territory support and custom development'.

Cox will also consult with studios planning to use Emergent's technology, and build relationships with potential publishing and middleware partners.

"My experience in the video game industry has allowed me to work on several engine solutions, and it's refreshing to now work with a technology designed from the ground up to provide an advanced workflow solution for developers that doesn't create debugging issues or end game problems," said Cox

www.emergent.net

Former Wizards of the Coast executive Randy Buehler has joined **Mind Control Software** as vice president of business strategy.

Buehler's new role sees him join two other former Wizards employees, Andrew Finch and Alan Comer, to work on the recently announced project *Mind Twist* – a new online strategy game from *Magic: The Gathering* creator Richard Garfield.

During his time at Wizards, Buehler served for many years managing all content creation for *Magic: The Gathering* in both its tabletop and online incarnations.

"There is a huge amount of tabletop gaming money being made that hasn't crossed over to the internet yet," said Andrew Leker, CEO, founder, and chief designer of Mind Control Software. "We plan to utilise these key hires to bring all the best elements of great tabletop games to the latest game playing platforms.

"As online gaming blossoms across internet-connected platforms, Mind Control Software will continue to focus on innovation and creativity, while carving a niche for ourselves in the strategy-gaming genre."

www.mind-control.com

Casual gaming pioneer **PopCap** has hired a 20-year tech veteran to take up the role of chief financial officer.

The newly-appointed Robert Chamberlain, who has spent around three decades in the finance sector, lavished much praise on his new company.

"PopCap's something of an anomaly in the software business – and a rarity in the technology sector as a whole," he said, adding that his new employer has been "profitable from day one while growing to nearly 250 full-time employees in ten years while never taking outside funding, which is a major accomplishment.

"Best of all, the company has tremendous potential, in terms of geographic, platform and channel growth – and I'm excited to be a part of it."

Chamberlain joins PopCap as CFO after his work at firms such as F5 Networks, Onyx Software and Watchguard Technologies.

www.popcap.com

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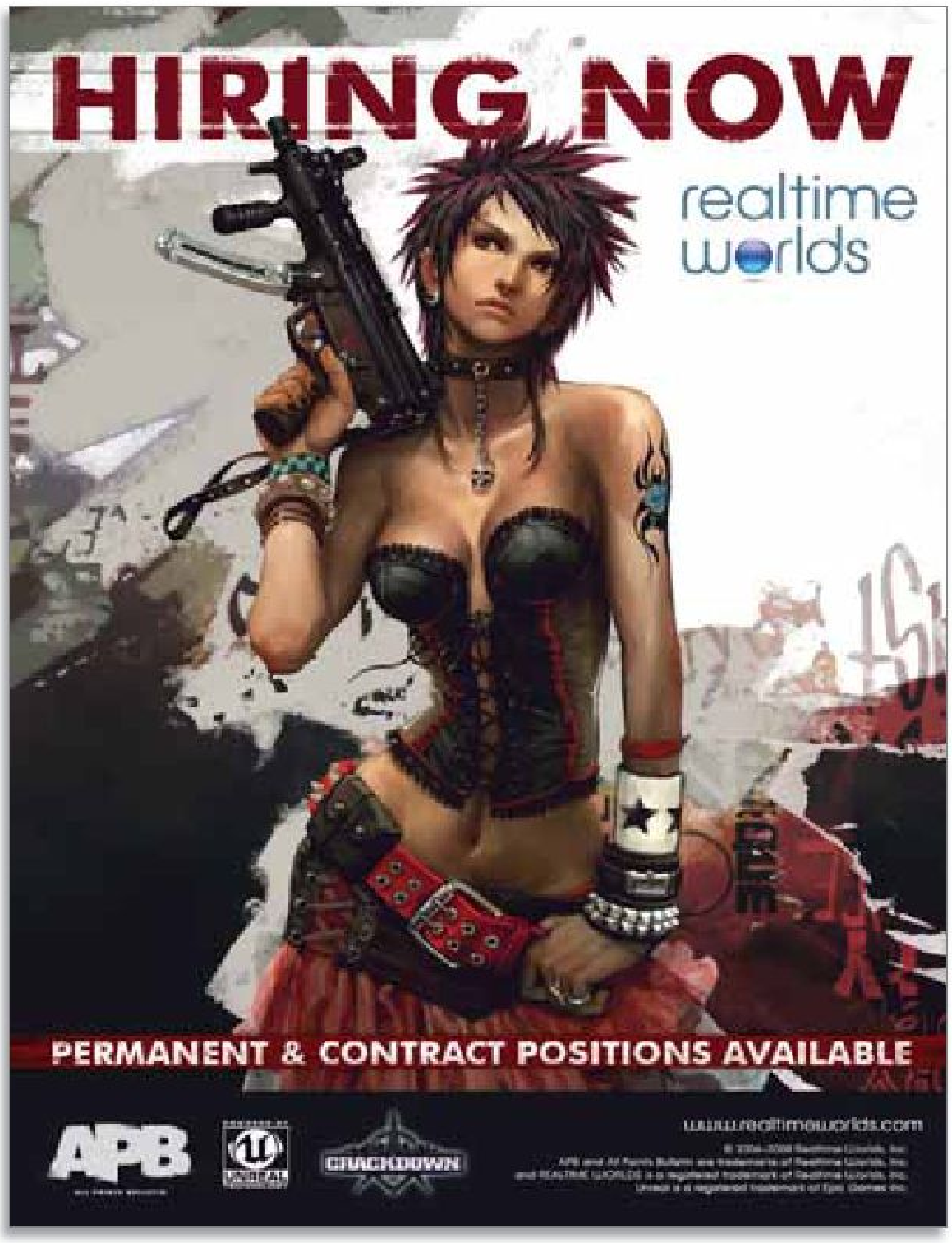

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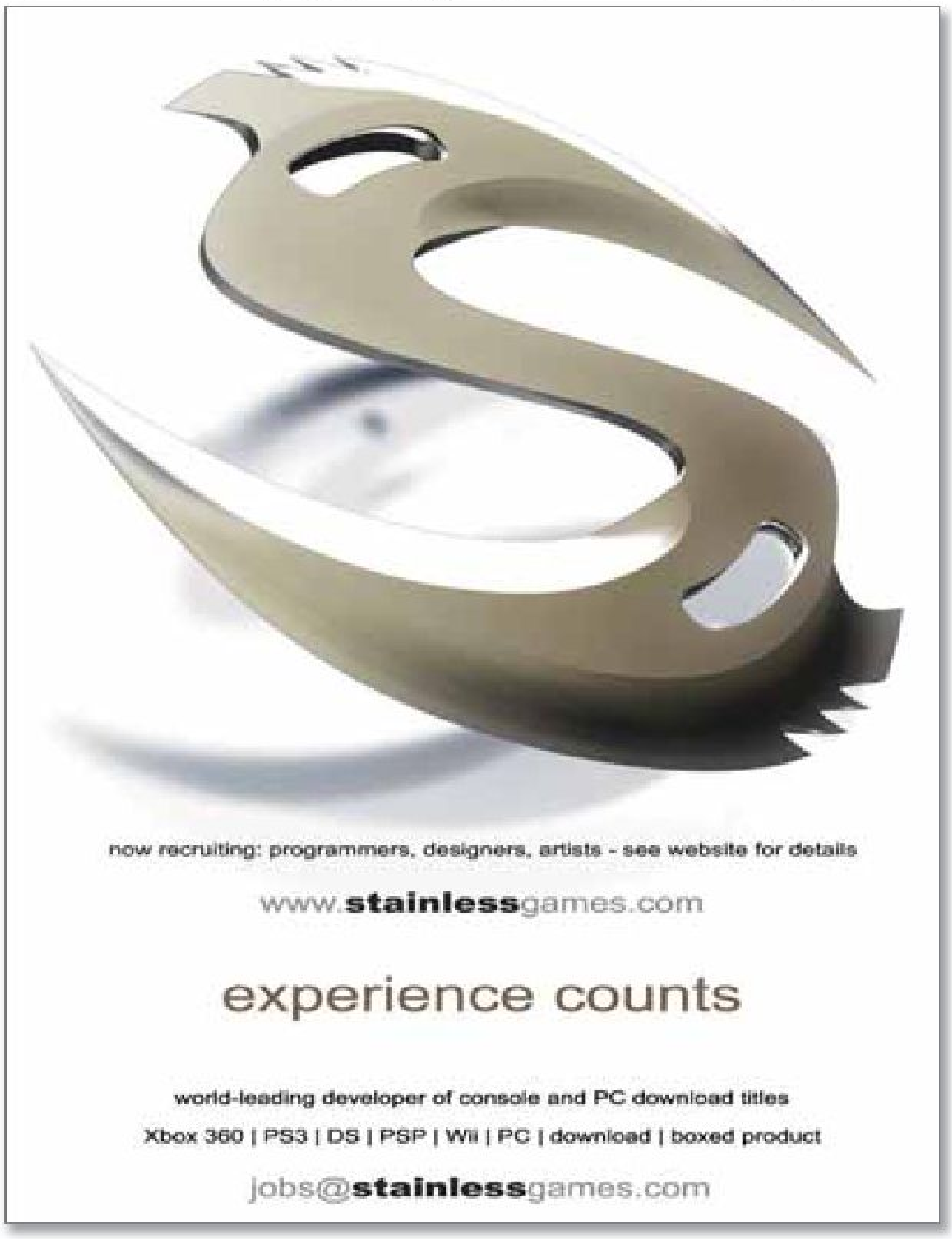

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Tools News

David Braben joins Phonetic Arts board

Game design veteran David Braben has been appointed to the board of **Phonetic Arts**, the UK-based in-game dialogue middleware group.

Phonetic Arts is aiming to 'revolutionise' the game development sector with tech that can generate natural speech dynamically.

Despite such lofty ambitions, Phonetic Arts says the tech is a reality and being developed today.

The group says it has created unique technology comprised of a speech synthesis engine and voice development environment which "allows games to speak with any voice and say any sentence."

"The speech produced is completely natural and will, for the first time, enable games developers to generate voice content which matches the high quality of other parts of the games," said the group.

Braben will take on the role as non-executive director at Phonetic Arts, and remains the chairman at long-standing developer Frontier.

The *Elite* designer said: "In-game dialogue has come a long way but there's still so much it can accomplish. I believe that the team at Phonetic Arts has a compelling product that will add new depth to games."

www.phonetic-arts.com

Illuminate Labs intergrates Beast technology with Gamebryo

Gamebyro engine owner **Emergent** has struck a new partnership with Swedish firm Illuminate Labs, the prominent lighting solutions company that has provided tech for games such as *Killzone 2*, *Gran Turismo* and *Mirror's Edge*.

Developers who chose to license both Gamebryo engine and Illuminate Lab's Beast tech will now be able to create global illumination lightmaps directly within the LightSpeed game editor.

In flaunting its own Beast engine, Illuminate said that the tech could 'automatically' provide artists with 'natural effects such as color bounces, realistic nuances in the shadows and soft shadows from the light sources.'

The company added that HDR environments can be used to achieve 'natural-looking lighting' without the need to apply a direct light source.

John Austin, Emergent's VP of partnerships, welcomed the deal: "This not only gives games built on LightSpeed outstanding lighting, but it also makes it very easy for artists and designers to add global illumination to their scenes and to quickly see the results in the editor and in their games simultaneously."

www.illuminatelabs.com

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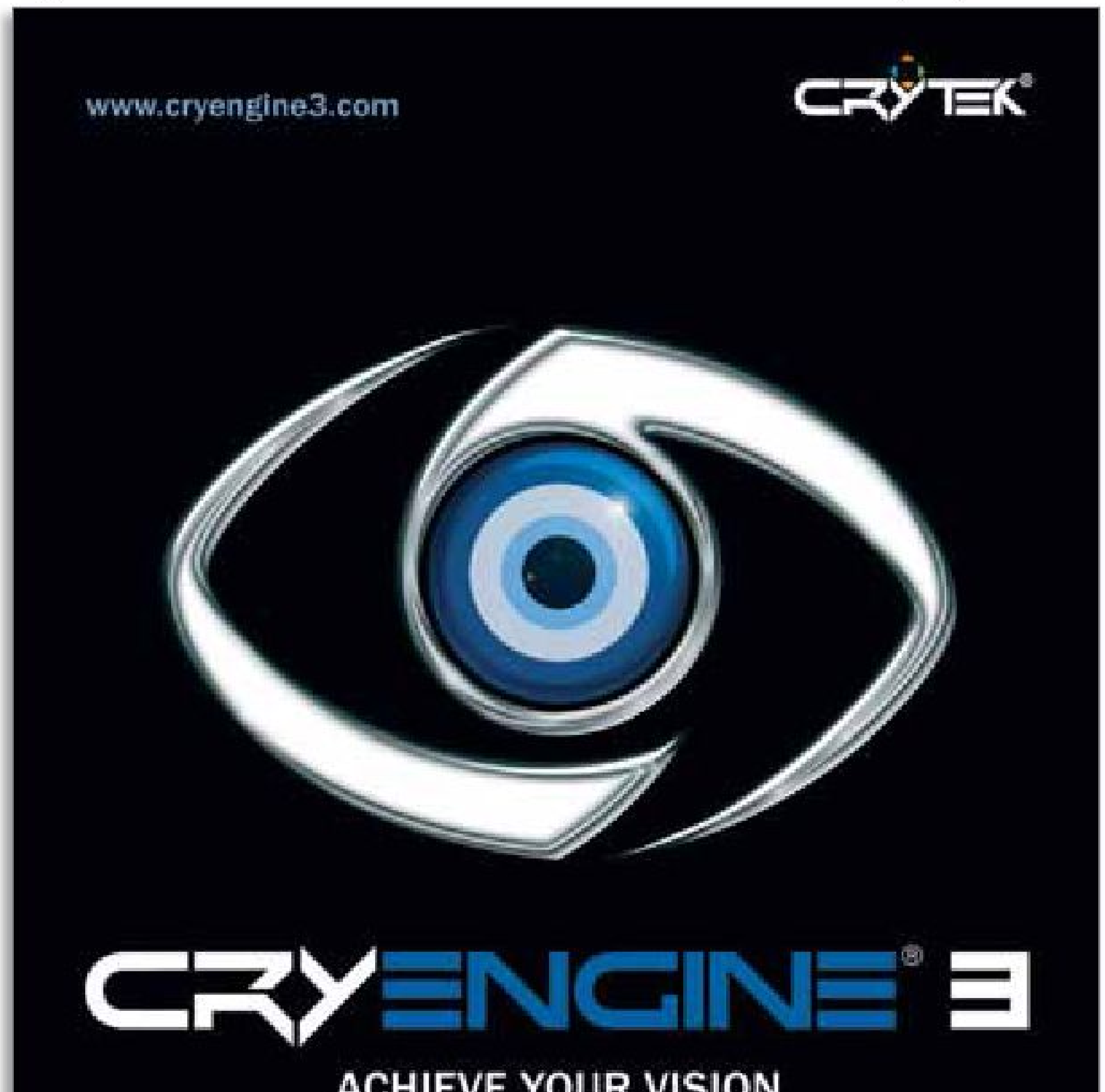

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Area of Expertise: Vector graphics

Scaleform's GFx 3.0 rich media engine, which promises to deliver a world leading hardware accelerated vector graphics UI solution, tessellates vector graphic shapes into triangles that modern 3D video cards can render.

The major advantage this offers over traditional software rasterisers is that, by converting data into triangles, Scaleform GFx can output vector graphics many times faster.

Without relying on FSAA or complex pixel shaders GFx vector graphics are hardware accelerated using a revolutionary new technique, immensely improving scalability and tessellation.

Additionally, extensive Flash ActionScript 2.0 support means that coding intelligent UI behaviours or complex mini-games is equally feasible, making GFx perfect for Flash developers. Elsewhere, GFx's multi-threading technology means users can play files on separate threads, making uninterrupted UIs a reality, and enabling asynchronous 'progressive' file streaming.

Finally, artists looking to build resizable UI components will find their job made easier by the inclusion of the vector and image based Flash scale9Grid, which includes transformation and special seamless image compatibility.

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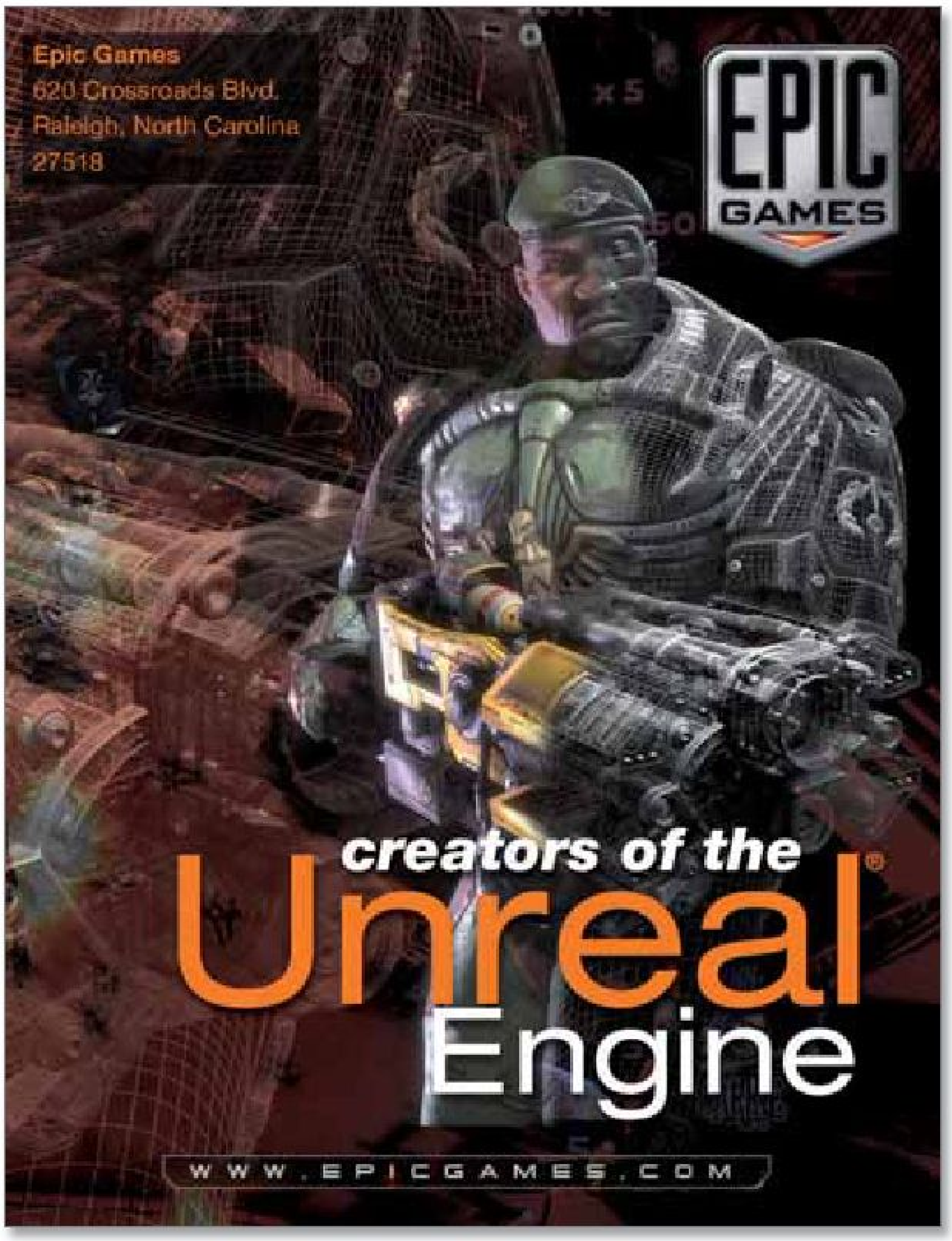

Services News

Side at work on several high profile projects

Side and Sidelines have been hard at work on a number of high profile projects, including *LittleBigPlanet* PSP and *Blue Toad Murders*.

Side has cast and recorded some of the UK's top Japanese actors for Eidos' *Mini Ninjas*, and provided talent for the casual games market in Zoonami's *Bonsai Barber*. The new topiary-themed Wii game features a number of quips provided by Sideliner Dean Wilkinson, who was also brought back to write for *LittleBigPlanet*'s PSP incarnation.

Meanwhile Sidelines writer Iain Lowson is working with Relentless on their first self-published game, *Blue Toad Murder Files*. The game is set to be a PlayStation Network exclusive.

For the older player, Side has also been working on a pair of Wii horror survival games currently courting a great deal of enthusiasm with the consumer. For Deep Silver's *Cursed Mountain*, Side sourced, directed and recorded an international cast for the Tibetan-based adventure.

EA also made use of the company's services for *Dead Space: Extraction*, on which Side's Justin Villiers directed both vocal and physical performances.

"Side's latest work reflects the incredibly diverse nature of the current game sector," said Andy Emery, creative director at Side. "Casting and recording Japanese ninjas one day and space colonists the next certainly keeps us on our toes"

www.side.com

Audiomotion captures Lionel Messi for PES 2010

For the second time, Konami has commissioned Audiomotion to provide motion capture services for high-profile football game *PES 2010*.

The mo-cap session focused on highly regarded Barcelona forward Lionel Messi, capturing the sportsman's movements for the game. The session took place in late May, shortly after the UEFA cup final with Manchester United.

For Messi's performance, Audiomotion set up its portable rig of 50 cameras to create a 15-by-10 metre capture volume, showcasing the service-provider's ability to provide off-site mocap.

Messi's performance was attended by the world's consumer media, and used to build hype for the next *Pro Evo* game, due out in the autumn for PS2, PS3, PSP and Xbox 360.

"The Audiomotion crew were fantastic," said Scott Garrod, Konami's European licensing manager. "Everything ran very smoothly and we were very impressed with the setup."

Mick Morris, Audiomotion MD added: "It's been an honour to be asked by Konami to set up in Barcelona for this session, and especially exciting to be working with the incredibly talented Lionel Messi. Location shoots are always challenging but our studio crew stepped up to the mark and, as always, delivered."

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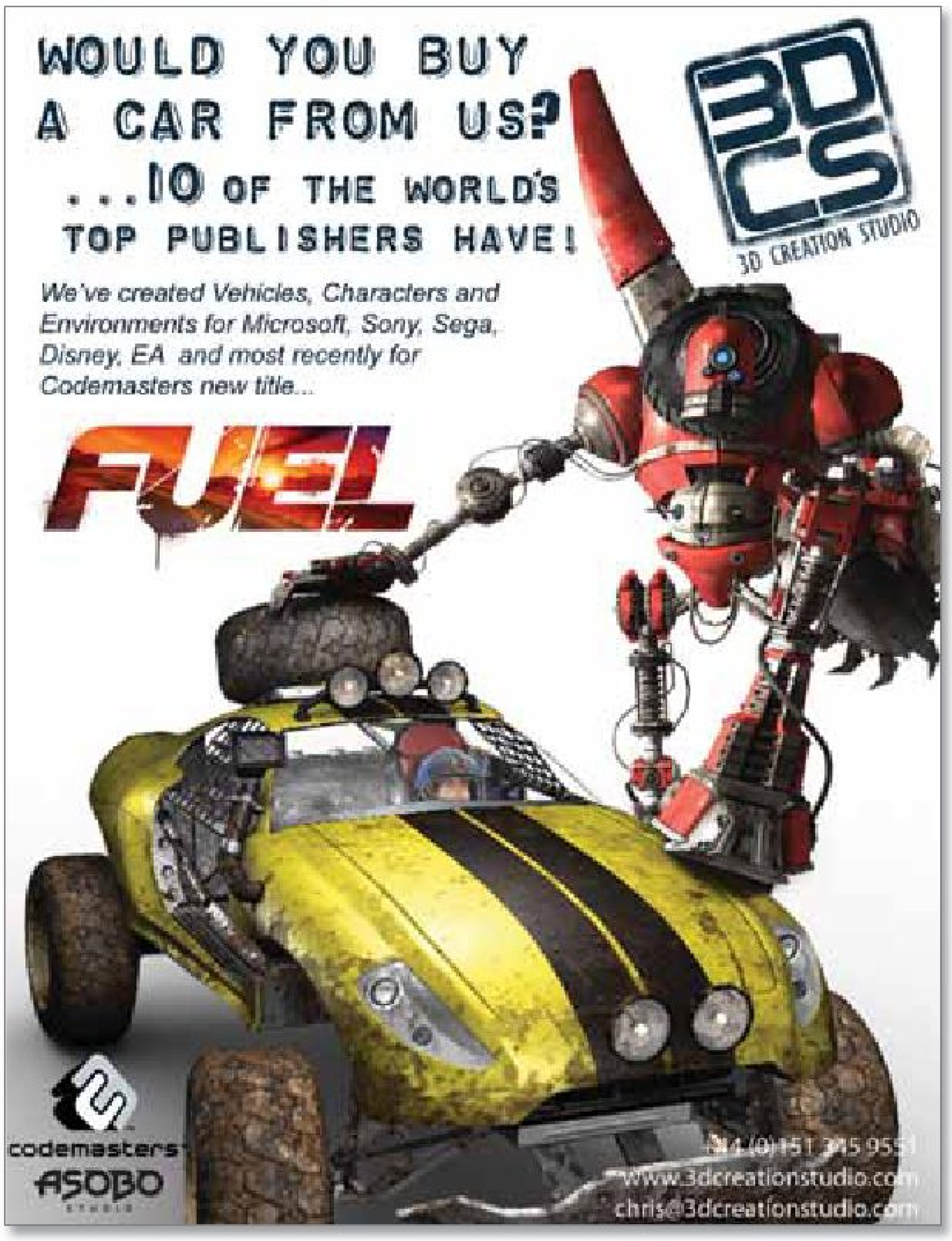

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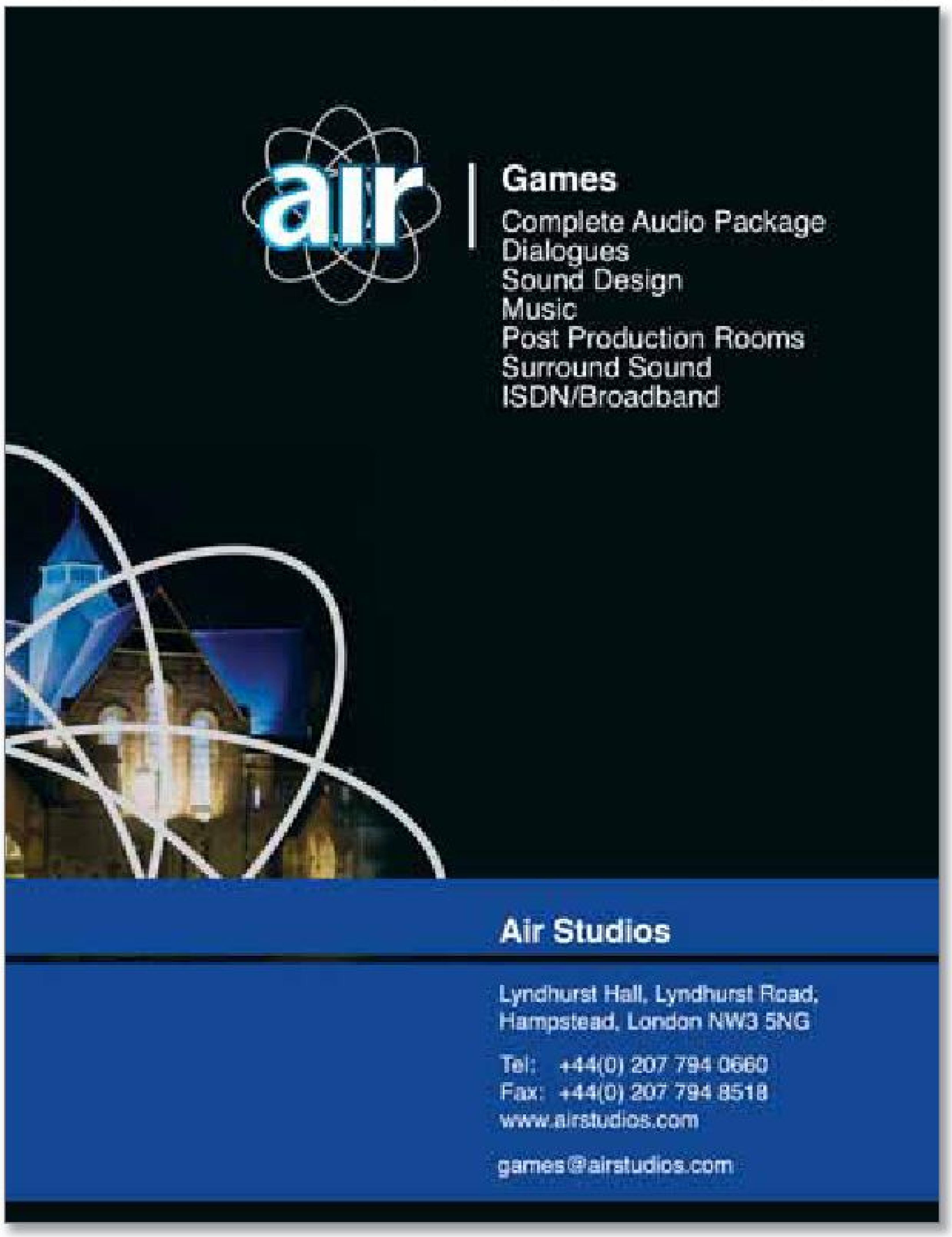

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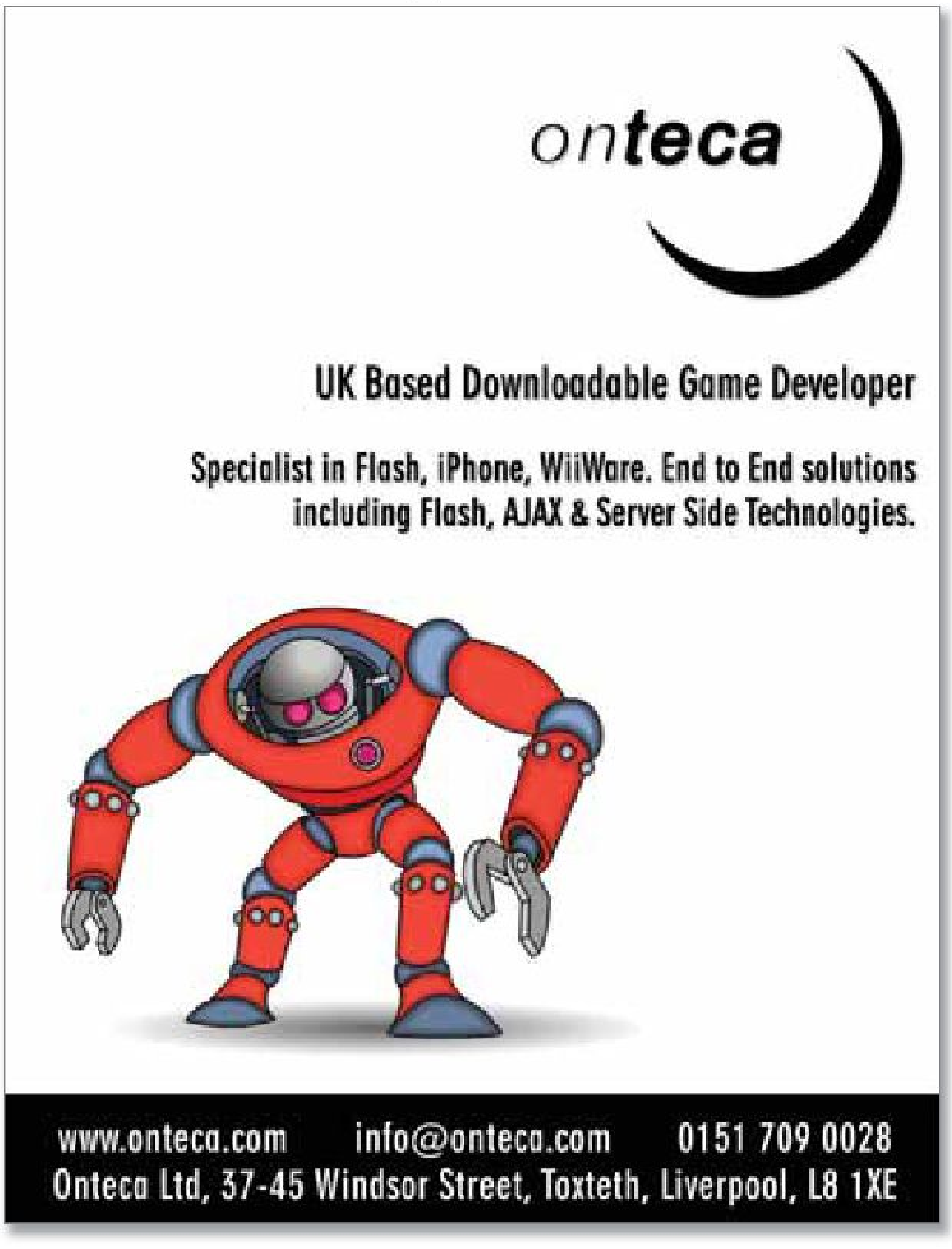

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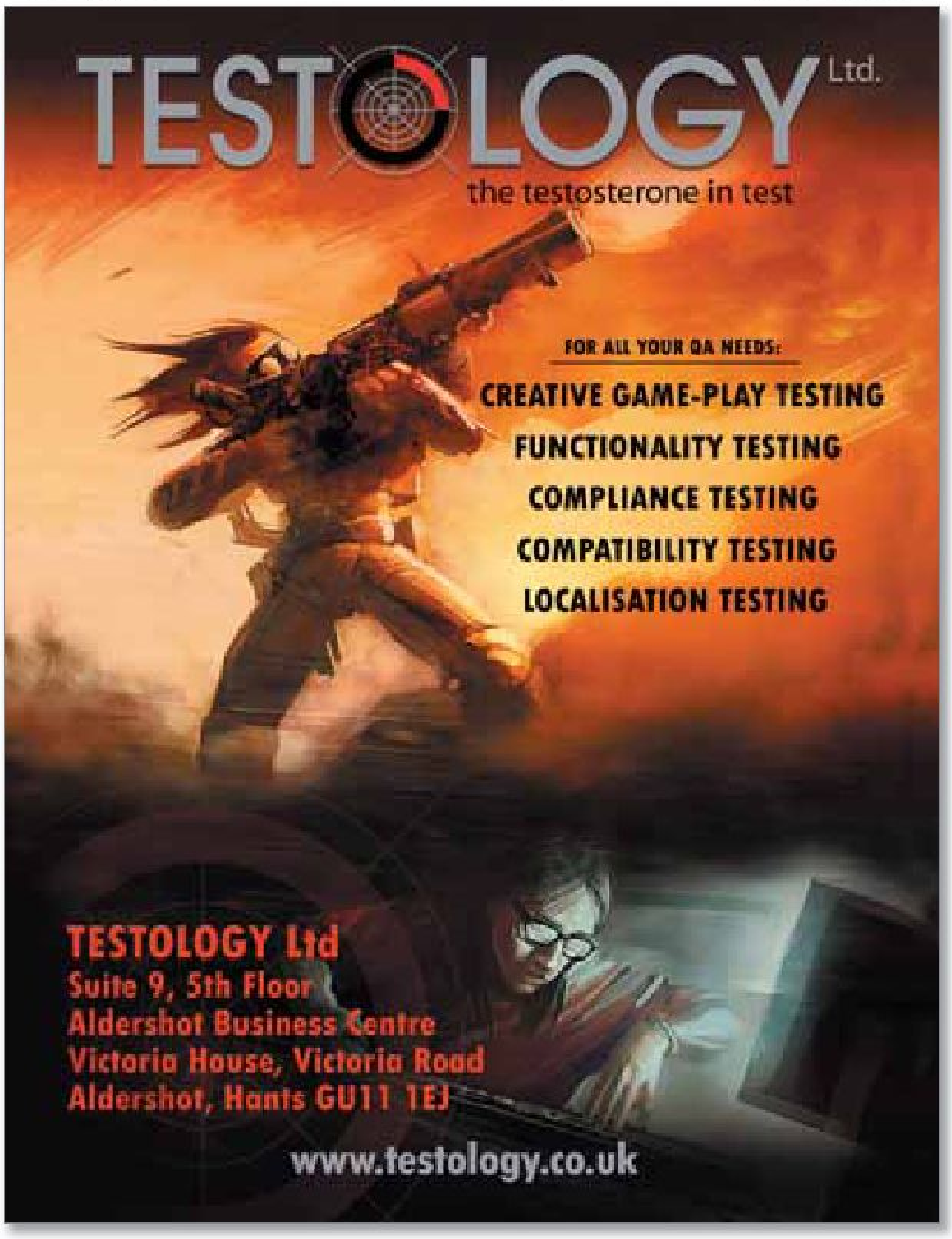

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Training News

Centre for Digital Entertainment established

The UK is taking fast action to reclaim its place as a games industry global leader by launching a £6.3 million 'world class' skills centre programme.

The Centre for Digital Entertainment (CDE) is a vast collaborative effort between the UK's games industry and universities to ensure Britain is armed with a new generation of skilled game creators.

The scheme has a £6.3 million fund pool it will use to take student game designers to the very places where they can best hone their skills; the studios themselves, working on real projects.

A wide range of UK developers are pledging their support for the scheme, from Lionhead, Frontier Developments, SCEE, Microsoft and NaturalMotion to Bizarre Creations, Codemasters, Rare, Relentless Software, and Zoë Mode.

The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council has pledged to inject the CDE with around £6.3 million. The money will provide full funding for 50 doctoral studentships for eight years.

Frontier MD Dave Walsh (pictured) said the CDE would benefit the British games industry 'significantly'.

"Currently there is a big need for high-calibre technical people and the proposed centre will address this shortage effectively," he added.

www.digital-entertainment.org

Hamburg bolsters gaming offering

In a bid to bolster its dev sector credentials, the German city of Hamburg is funding a masters game degree programme at its principal university.

Hamburg University of Applied Sciences will offer a masters degree programme entitled *Sound, Vision, Games*, funded by the State Ministry of Economic and Labour Affairs.

Research by the gamecity:Hamburg network says the region is looking to create some 300 new industry jobs this year.

"At the national level, Hamburg leads the way in terms of support for the games industry," said Senator Karin v. Welck.

"By facilitating the new masters degree programme, the Ministry of Economic and Labour Affairs is paving the way for another central component of a powerful and sustainable infrastructure for Hamburg as a primary centre of the gaming industry."

www.uas7.org

Training payout for Scottish dev staff

Game development staff based in Scotland are being offered as much as £500 in bursary funds if they sign up to a skills development course.

The new deal is part of broad plans to bolster Scotland's game development credentials on the global stage.

Skillset Scotland has £40,000 at its disposal, and each of its grants can aid developers with as much as 50 per cent of combined travel, accommodation and training fees.

Freelance developers, meanwhile, are eligible for £800 in training funds.

"We want to make sure that Scotland's priority screen industries – game, TV, film and animation – are in a very strong position to compete in the global marketplace," said Skillset Scotland director Alasdair Smith.

"It is essential that we provide the immense talent we have with the tools to develop and show the world that Scotland is a force to be reckoned with in the world of film, TV, animation, computer games and interactive media," he added.

The payout scheme is eligible for Scottish residents with two years' professional games industry experience. Those applying for the grant will need to have already been accepted onto a relevant training course.

Application deadline is February 26th, 2010.

www.skillset.org/uk/scotland/trainingfund

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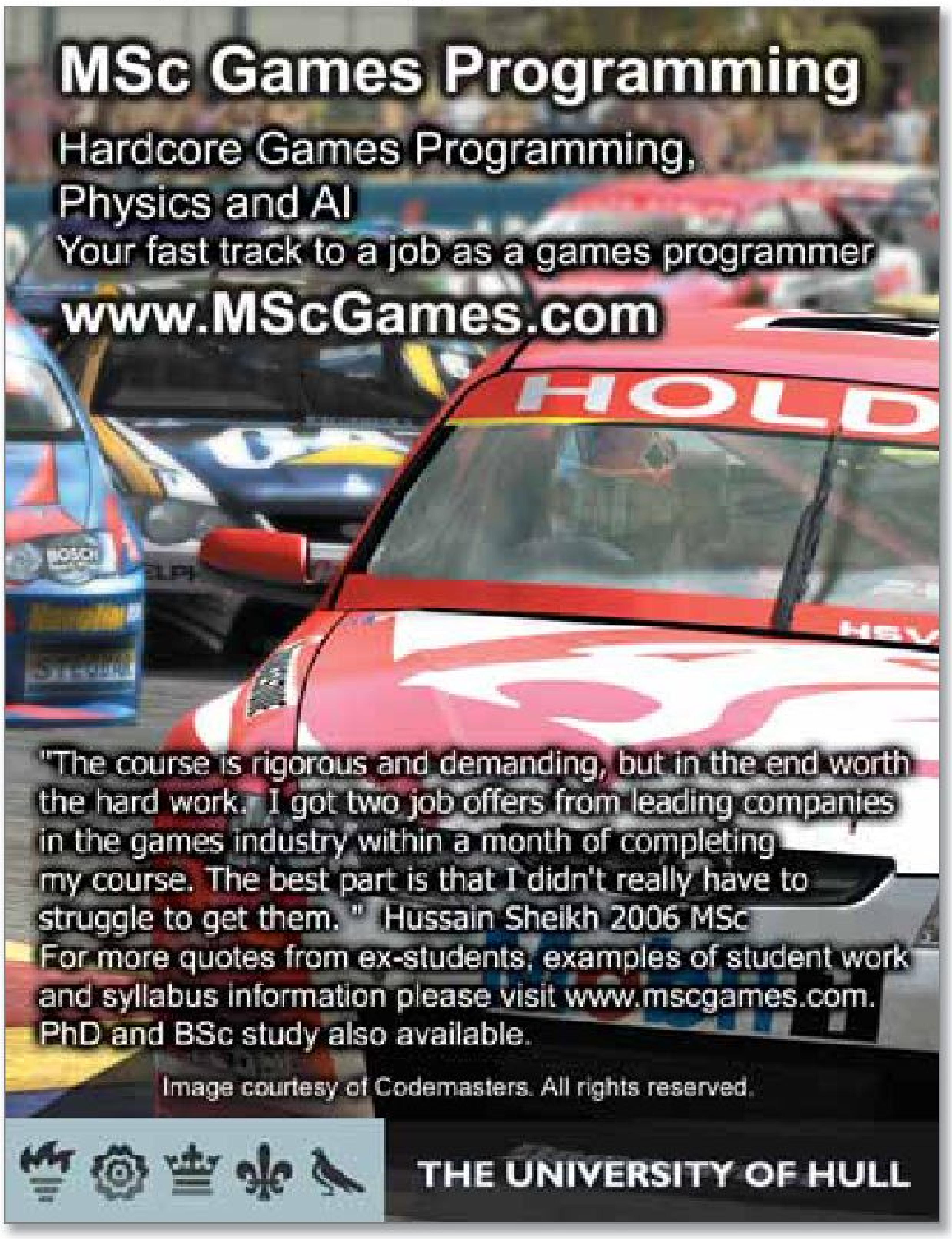

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"The course is rigorous and demanding, but in the end worth the hard work. I got two job offers from leading companies in the games industry within a month of completing my course. The best part is that I didn't really have to struggle to get them." Hussain Sheikh 2006 MSc
For more quotes from ex-students, examples of student work and syllabus information please visit www.mscgames.com.
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SAY WHAT?!?

"How sad would you have to be to spend time looking for a texture map of some tits? Have they not heard of the internet?"

David Cage wonders why anyone would bother trying to reverse-engineer a game to find sexual content.

"Condemned 2 is the most depressing game ever. An alcoholic fighting tramps with planks? It's like a horrible documentary."

Charlie Brooker weighs in on Monolith's grim-a-thon, and simultaneously whets our appetite for Gameswipe.

"Sharon got addicted to Tetris. I remember lying in bed and saying 'Shit, are you playing that fucking game?' and then I'd hear 'Bastard! Fucking arsehole!'"

Ozzy Osbourne describes, with typical veuve, his wife's obsession with Tetris.

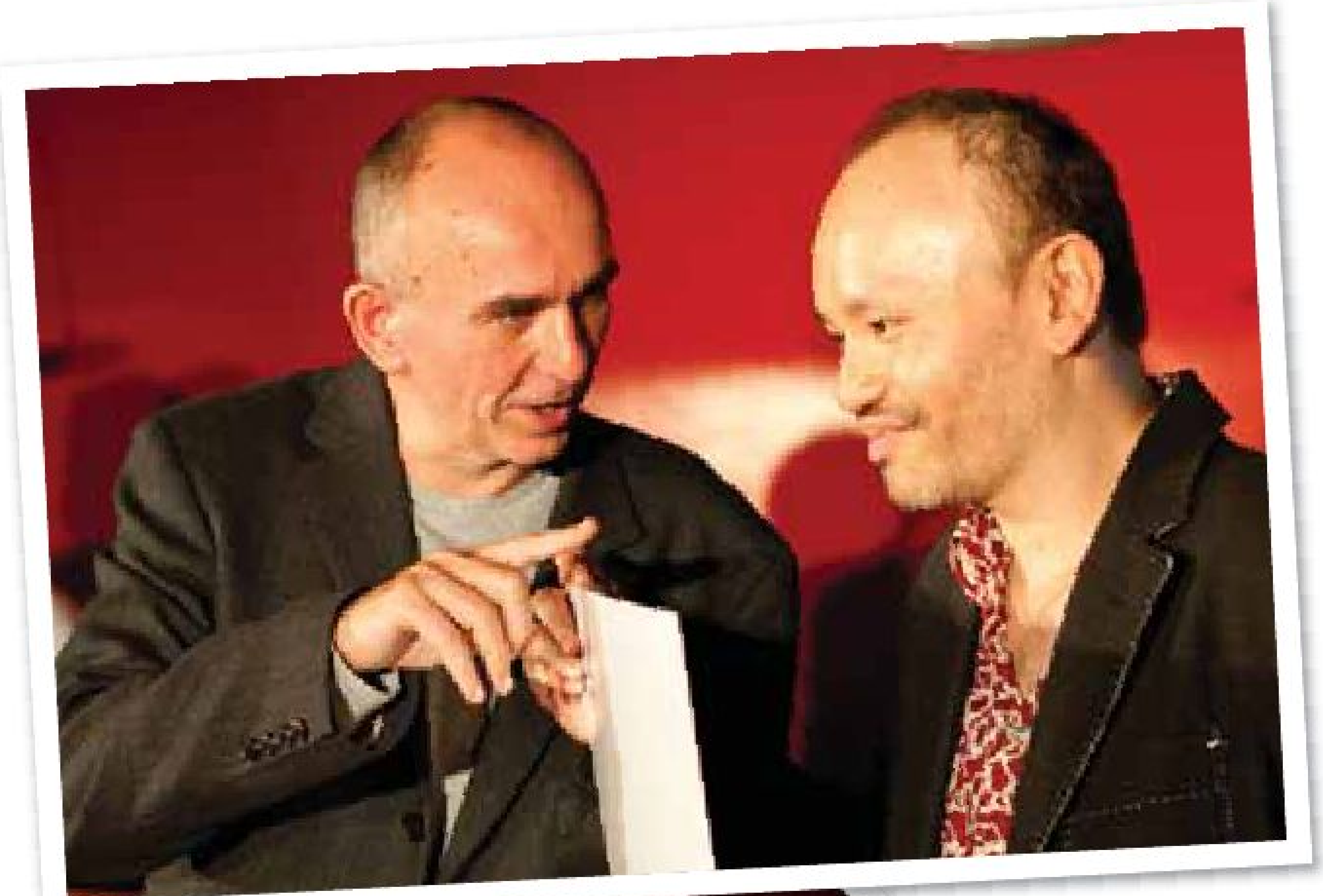
"I'm not one for sightseeing. I prefer to stay in and play video games. Right now I like Pro Evo and Call of Duty."

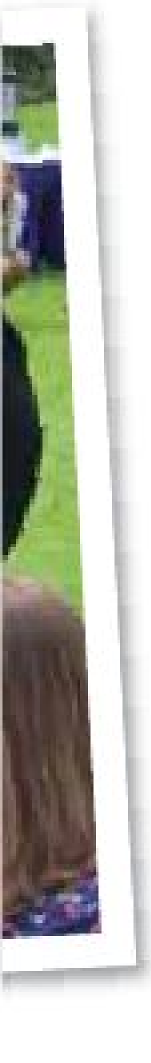
Record-smashing sprinter Usain Bolt tells the BBC why he didn't see much of Berlin at the World Athletics Championships.

The month in pictures

◀**GDC Europe**
Last month saw the inaugural GDC Europe in Cologne open its doors to the public, alongside the new Gamescom retail and consumer extravaganza. Remedy's Matias Myllyrinne (*left*) introduced the Remedy way of IP and game development, remaining unapologetic for the extended gestation period for *Alan Wake*. Quantic Dream's David Cage (*below left*) stirred the audience into a frenzy by emploring designers to guard their vision from marketing influence. Our personal highlight of the event, though, was the hot dog and lentil soup we ate one lunchtime. That's cuisine, right there.

▲**Flower Power**
To celebrate the European launch of its debut WiiWare title *Bonsai Barber*, the team at Zoonami held a garden party affair. On hand was debonaire man-about-town (and Zoonami founder) Martin Hollis, a brilliantly shaped cake and even a magician to entertain the guests. A high-class event for a high-class game, and we didn't feel out of place at all. No, really.





▲ **Game Hotel**
Taking place on the Tuesday evening of GDC Europe, popular arty event Game Hotel took over the roof of Microsoft's Cologne offices, and featured Harmonix founder Alex Rigopulos (pictured here drumming away to the *The Beatles: Rock Band*), Peter Molyneux, Patrice Desilets and Keiichi Yano. The evening took a turn for the surreal when 'renowned' Scottish YouTube star Greig Stewart played game music themes on the theremin – and if you don't believe us, take look at the bemusement written all over Alex Rigopulos' face. 'Eclectic' indeed.

MY FAVOURITE GAME

Notable developers tell us which game warmed their heart, caught their eye, and ate up their free time…

DOT MATRIX WITH STEREO SOUND
BATTERY
SCORE
101
LEVEL
0
LINES
0

XBOX
GEARS OF WAR

I LOVE… TETRIS (AND ZELDA)

by Cliff Bleszinski, Design Director, Epic Games

“The one game that's always held up for me is *Tetris*. You can fire up that game right now and you'd still love it.

When you play *Tetris* your mind will work differently, you'll go through a different cycle of unraveling your problems in the back of your head. With *Tetris* you're multi-threading, and I've loved playing the game ever since I was a child. It's digital meditation.

I guess I should mention the game that comes close in second, which would be the first *Zelda*. That game hit me at this point when I was 13 years old in New England during one summer, and it captured that magic of the time.

A great game fundamentally is about escapism but it's also about tapping into your inner-child, and I'd say when playing *Zelda* I felt like I was that little boy in the woods discovering things, as Link does.

I was so skeptical about the game when I first heard of it, because I was a massive Mario fan, but it was magic for me, and when I met Miyamoto for the first time I felt honoured. I was far more excited to meet him than any other entertainment person.”

Coming soon in develop

OCTOBER

Asia Special

We take a look at the growth of games development, IP and technology in the Far East

Audio Outsourcing

Special investigation into the future of music, sound effects and voice work in games development

WiiWare & DSiWare

What impact has Nintendo's download service had on games?

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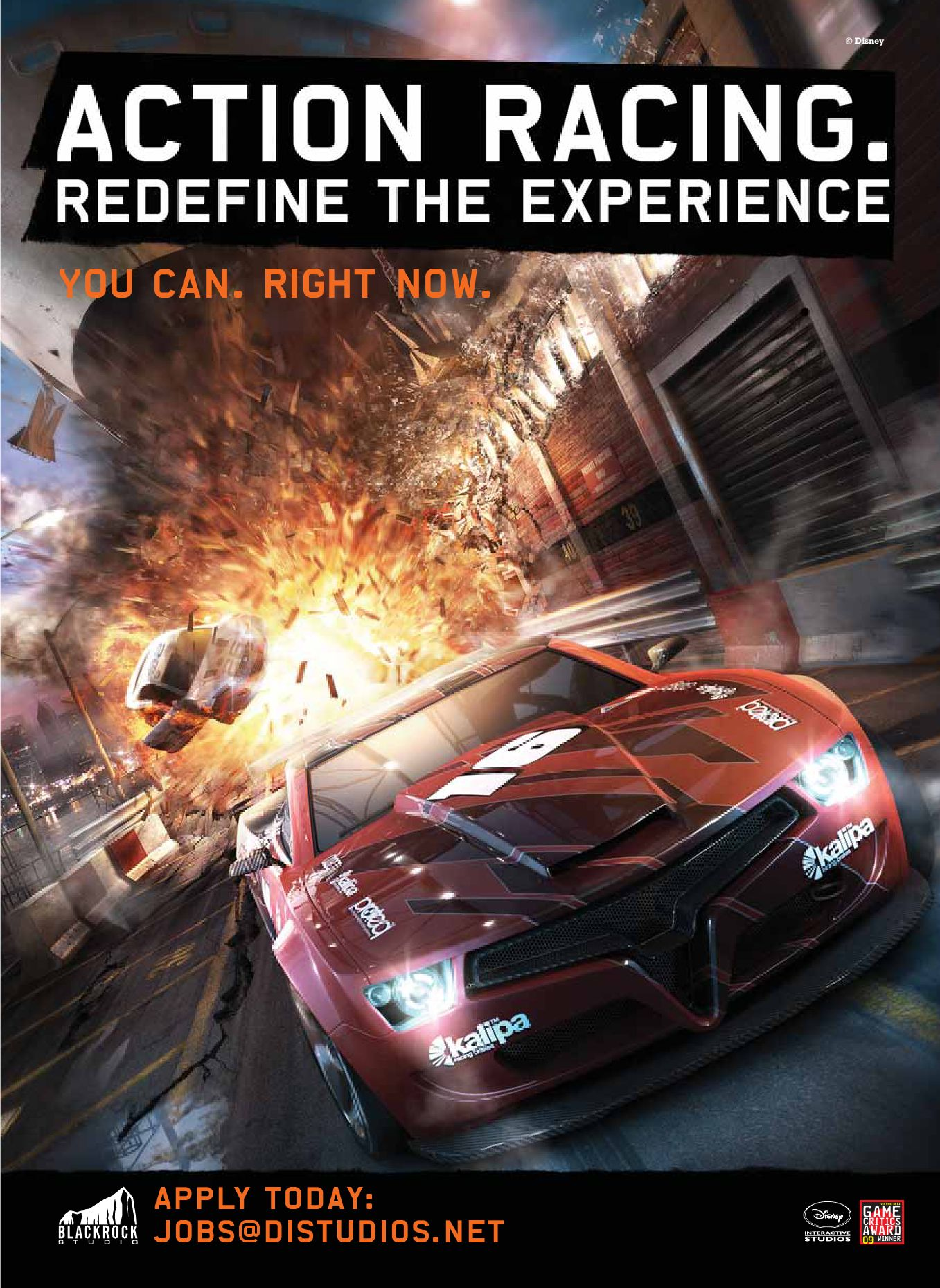
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